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My story

Lily Skall

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THE "WRITE YOUR STORY" COLLECTION

MY STORY

Lily Skall

Makor Jewish Community Library
2000

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Dedicated to the memory of

my parents Mariska and Jakob Seiden

my husband Ernst Skall

my daughter Judy Weinstein

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Unless explained in the text, words that appear in italics are defined in the glossary at the end of the book.

ONE

I was born in Vienna, Austria, on the 30th September, 1918, under the star sign of Libra. In October of that year the great Austro-Hungarian Empire just disintegrated. As a young child I was always told my birth helped to end the First World War. It made me feel very important to think that somehow I had some part in this historic event. Alas, it was only some years later that I finally realized people were only teasing and I had absolutely nothing to do with 'helping' to end this terrible war. As young as I was, I nevertheless remember the feeling of disappointment!

My earliest recollection is the birth of my brother Kurt on the 23rd February, 1924. I was five and a half at the time. Early in the morning of that day my aunt, Tante Irene, and her husband, Onkel Hermann, came to our flat to pick me up because my mother was about to give birth at home.

I didn't have much of a clue about what was going on, but I revelled in all the attention they gave me, allowing me to choose whatever I wanted from the *Konditorei*, a cake and chocolate shop. I asked for *Manner's Leberknoedel*, which at the time was my favourite chocolate. Leberknoedel is a most peculiar name for such a delicacy. It means 'liver dumpling' and is shaped like a small round ball. I can't recall the consistency, but I do remember so well how delicious it was.

We were away from the flat for most of the day. In the late afternoon we finally returned and there was my mother in bed

and next to her in the cot, my brother. I asked whether I could give him a kiss and my mother said yes, but on the forehead. I thought he looked so cute.

A week later it was his *brith*, or circumcision, with my Onkel Emil being *sandek*, having the honour of holding Kurt. I remember my mother, grandmother and Tante Irene sitting on the sofa and my father walking amongst all their friends, trying to get one particular man, Herr Springer, drunk on something they called '90%', whatever that meant! To me, it gave the impression of being very strong and that surely this drink would be the one that would succeed in getting poor Herr Springer drunk. I remember following my father around to see what was going to happen, because this sort of conspiracy seemed almost more exciting than the brith. My Onkel Ignaz, my father's youngest brother, was part of this so-called conspiracy. Whether they finally succeeded I can't remember, but I wouldn't be surprised if they did.

Perhaps I should explain where we lived and how. We had a rented flat on the third floor in the Fifteenth District. The flat was at the corner of *Talgasse* and *Mariahilferstrasse*, a long thoroughfare leading from the inner city right through to *Schoenbrunn*, the palace where the Austrian emperors used to live. The balcony of our flat looked out over Mariahilferstrasse. The flat consisted of one bedroom, where my parents and my brother slept, a dining room, where a folding bed was put up for me every night, a hall, kitchen, small maid's room, and believe it or not, a toilet. This deserves to be mentioned because a lot of the blocks of flats had just one toilet on each floor, which the tenants had to share. In the dining room we had a beautiful black grand piano. All the windows facing Mariahilferstrasse had

double glazing – two windows – one opening out into the street, the other one into the flat. They helped to cut out the noise from the street, or at least diminish it. During the winter months they gave more protection from the cold, with the help of the customary *Fensterpolster*, a special pillow designed to fit between the double windows.

Although we were amongst the 'lucky' ones who had an indoor toilet and didn't have to share with the neighbours, we didn't have a bathroom. While we were young children my mother, together with the maid, used to give us a bath in a portable bathtub. Later on there was the weekly bath at the *Troepferlbad*. What a ridiculous name that was. Translated, it means 'droplet bath'! This was located quite a walk away from where we lived. When you arrived at this Troepferlbad, the first and obviously most important thing was to pay for the privilege of having a bath. You were then handed a towel and were told which bathroom number had been allotted. Meanwhile, the tub would be filled by an attendant. The tub was quite large and very deep. When it was filled, one was left to one's own devices. I cannot recall whether there was a time limit to this procedure, but I assume there was. Compared with today's living standards, where many houses have more than one bathroom and one cannot possibly imagine going out without having a shower or a bath, it seems we've come a long way since these weekly Troepferlbad outings.

My mother Mariska Deutsch was born on February 21st, 1888, in Galgocz, now Hlohovec, Slovakia, the second eldest in a family of seven. She grew up speaking three languages, German with her parents, Hungarian at school and Slovak with the servants. The family left Galgocz around 1909 and settled in

Vienna. My mother was an excellent cook in the Hungarian-Czech-Austrian tradition. I have so many memories of the delicious dishes she prepared. Unfortunately I didn't inherit her culinary skills, nor the interest in acquiring them. There were always *Polsterzipf*, 'pillow corner', so called because of their triangular shape, and *Vanillakipferl*, vanilla horseshoes, in the house. What odd names the Austrians had for some of their delicacies! Her cheesecake was a delight. I have never again tasted anything like it, so light, with sliced roasted almonds on top of the cake. The mere memory of it makes my mouth water. She was also an elegant cook. Her open sandwiches had to be seen to be believed, the colours, the decoration, a feast for the eyes, not only for the stomach! She went to the *Schwendermarkt*, a produce market nearby, every morning to buy fresh supplies, then spent most of the day preparing meals.

Mitzi, our maid, lived with us for many years and helped in the household. I do remember so well my mother's advice to me with regard to Mitzi. "Don't ask her to wait on you, she is just as much a human being as you are," my mother would say. This advice left an incredible impression on me. Even today I find it quite difficult to ask someone to do something for me.

It was great fun watching Mitzi polish the parquetry floor in the flat. She had first a brush and then a polishing cloth, somehow attached to her feet. With these, she performed some sort of a dance and boy, could she make that floor shine! Mitzi would sit with us around the dining room table, tatting or crocheting, while my mother would work on her lovely petit-point embroideries, or the carpets she made soon after my brother was born. We still have the two carpets she made at that time. How proud and happy my mother would be to know that

they now adorn her eldest granddaughter Evie's office at La Trobe University, where she obtained her Ph.D. and now is a lecturer in anthropology.

My mother was the second eldest of seven siblings. Her elder sister was Tante Elsa, who was married quite late in life. She had no family and died in the Holocaust together with her husband. Next after my mother came Onkel Emil. He married Helene Backenroth, or as my brother and I used to call her, irreverently and certainly not to her face, das Backrohr, the oven. They married in 1938, just before migrating to England. From there they eventually made their way to New York together with Helene's daughter, from her first marriage, Renee. Onkel Marcel was the only one of the siblings who had remained in Galgocz and later on settled in Budapest with his wife and two daughters. He didn't survive the war. I never knew another brother, Ali, who sadly was killed fighting in World War One, quite early on. Tante Irene was next. She made her way to New York together with her second husband, Dr. Karl Fuerth and his two children, Gerty and Hans, from two previous marriages. I still keep in touch with Hans, a pediatrician with the Kayser Foundation who lives in Los Angeles with his wife, Lee. They have three daughters.

The youngest in my mother's family was named Leo, but was called Onkel Buby, pronounced 'booby', meaning little boy in German. He managed, with the help of Sigmund Freud's daughter Anna, to get a permit to go to London. There was a close connection between Onkel Buby and Sigmund Freud: Sigmund Freud was Onkel Buby's therapist in Vienna. Onkel Buby had become very friendly with Herta Glatz, a young Jewish opera singer in Vienna. I don't know how she managed to get to New York quite so soon after the *Anschluss*, German occupation,

but she was instrumental in obtaining the necessary papers for Onkel Buby to get to New York from London. She performed at the Metropolitan Opera in New York. No romance developed. Their friendship remained just that. Onkel Buby disliked his nickname and insisted on being called Peter, even though his name was Leo, so Onkel Peter it became. He built up a lucrative practice as a psychiatrist in New York near Central Park. The block of surgeries, just about all occupied by psychiatrists, was jokingly called 'the mental block'.

Back to Vienna. I had a very good relationship with my brother. We enjoyed playing together, especially with his Meccano set. I remember how we built a cable car, fixed a rope from the balcony door to the dining room door and ran the cable car along the rope. Being the elder by nearly five and a half years, I was rather protective of my brother. When I was about thirteen or fourteen, Kurt had to have a papilloma removed from the sole of his foot. My mother asked me to take him to the *Algemeine Krankenhaus*, the General Hospital, where my Onkel Buby was a young intern. The lady doctor attending my brother was very abrupt. The treatment was extremely painful and she yelled at him to hold still. By that time I disliked her intensely and I told her not to yell at my brother or I would take him away. She gave me a look as if to say, "How dare you", but she was gentler after that and was able to finish the removal of the papilloma.

During my primary school years, life seemed to run its pleasant, uneventful course. I remember so well my primary school teacher, Luise Jessen, a kindly elderly lady with grey hair pulled back into a bun, always dressed in grey. She appeared to be all grey! In those days, the teacher one started off with in Year One stayed with the same class for the next four years, until it

was time to continue at High School.

In these early years, there were outings with our parents, grandmother and sometimes Tante Irene, to the *Tivoli*, an outdoor café close to Schoenbrunn which was always very busy on Sundays. We usually ordered *saure Milch*, a sort of buttermilk, with bread and butter and *Liptauer*, a delicious spread consisting of butter, cream cheese, anchovies, mustard and a dash of Hungarian paprika. During the winter months there would be walks along Mariahilferstrasse and visits to one of the cafes *zur Jause*, for afternoon tea. There was always a wide selection of delicious cakes too.

On the day before *Yom Kippur*, the Day of Atonement, my father brought home a hen and a cock to perform the ritual of *Kapparot*, a custom in which the sins of a person are symbolically transferred to a fowl. He took us into the maid's room to perform the ritual, which involved swinging the fowl around the head three times. The fowl must have been terrified because it would screech loudly. As the maid's room only had a small window that faced into the courtyard, its screeching was least likely to be heard by the neighbours from there. My father stopped this custom eventually. I can only assume it might have been because of the neighbours.

To think how easy it is today to do the washing! Washing day in those times was quite a production. The washerwoman used to come once a month. The day before her arrival, all the washing was sorted. On the day, it was taken down to the basement where it was given all sorts of treatments - soaking, bleaching, bluing and starching. The procedure lasted the whole day. My mother would go back and forth, up and down the stairs from the third floor flat to the basement with supplies of food for

the washerwoman.

Morning tea time was very important. Tea time is a misnomer as there was most certainly no tea served. Tea would be drunk in case of illness, such as colds and flu, but the standard fare at ten o'clock was a pair of frankfurts with mustard, a kaiser roll and a glass of beer. For lunch my mother made veal goulash with gnocchi. The washerwoman worked hard and had to be fed accordingly. My father felt neglected on those days as the washerwoman was catered to instead! At the end of the day the washing was carried up five flights of stairs from the basement to the attic where it was hung to dry. Each tenant had a certain day allocated for this major event in the household. When the bed linen was dry, it was taken to a place not far from our house to be run through the mangle. The next step was the ironing. Thinking back now, I can understand why my father dreaded these washing days!

We must have reached a stage financially where my father could afford to buy a car. Prior to buying one, he had to obtain his licence. That was not so easy, as apart from the driving test, you also had to have a thorough knowledge of the mechanical workings of a car. From what I can recall, my father did not pass the mechanical test and ended up going to Wiener Neustadt, a smaller town in Lower Austria. I don't know why it was supposedly easier to obtain a licence there, but he did pass the second time. He then purchased a Citroen. My mother was not particularly happy as I seem to remember that she didn't have too much confidence in my father's driving ability. I guess this might sound somewhat familiar to some men!

The real problem, however, was where to garage the car. The blocks of flats in Vienna had no provision for parking and one

was not allowed to park in the street overnight. My father found a garage in the Fifth District, but to get there we had to travel by tram for about fifteen minutes from our house. With waiting for the tram, it took us nearly half an hour to pick up the car and half an hour to get back home after it was parked. I can't remember how long we had this nice Citroen, but it didn't stay in our possession long at all. My mother seemed quite relieved when the car was sold.

Our family used to go on vacation for the school holidays during July and August. My mother would rent a house in one of the villages not too far from Vienna. The owner of the house would move in with some relatives while the house was let and the rent received for the two months would be an extra income for the owner. Although the house was furnished, we brought just about everything but the proverbial kitchen sink from home - bedding, crockery and cutlery. I can't remember exactly what else there was, but I do remember travelling to our destination in the truck which was used for deliveries for father's business. Mitzi came along as well. What a 'production' this must have been! My mother always made sure there was a good swimming pool in the village for us kids. Very often, my Aunt Pepi, Onkel Ignaz's wife would come along as well with her little boy, my cousin Norbert. My father would come on a Friday to stay over the weekend. He had a walking stick, not because he needed it, but in those days this was a fashion accessory. There was a flashlight fitted into the handle of the walking stick and I remember my father waving this 'light' from the train on his return trip to Vienna on Sunday nights.

One year we stayed at Sauerbrunn, a spa well frequented by Jewish families. On one of our walks we came through a lane.

There was a plum tree laden with delicious fruit, its heavy branches overhanging the fence. My mother picked some of the plums for us. On our return to Vienna she came back from one of her shopping trips to the Schwendermarkt with the kind of plums we ate in Sauerbrunn. My brother's first question was, were these plums bought or 'stolen' off the tree?

The older I get, the more I realise what an outstanding woman my mother was. I regret that the realisation has come so late in my life. She was not one of those 'guilt-inflicting' mothers, quite the contrary. Whenever possible she would try to make things easier, never criticising or belittling us. She wasn't one of those parents whose vocabulary consisted of "Ah, you finally remembered my phone number!" or "I can hardly recognise your voice!" I will forever be grateful to my mother, and my father too, for allowing me to grow up without guilt, which unfortunately seems to be so prevalent amongst many parents today.

TWO

The four grades of primary school, *Volksschule*, were followed by eight years of secondary school, and after completing Volksschule, my parents discussed which secondary school I should attend. There were three choices of secondary school: *Hauptschule*, a State school, *Realgymnasium*, with emphasis on Latin, English and French, or *Gymnasium*, with emphasis on Greek. My father questioned the need for a 'higher education' for a girl, but my mother insisted that I attend a Realgymnasium. "Whatever you learn and know, nobody can take away from you", was her constant reminder to us. My parents decided on sending me to the *Realgymnasium Rahlgasse* in the *Erster Bezirk*, or First District. It was an all-girls' private school, just off Mariahilferstrasse. There was a direct tramline, with a stop practically in front of our block of flats. Lessons were from eight to one, with physical education on one or two afternoons a week.

Getting up in the morning wasn't one of my strong points in those days, and many a time I'd arrive late, only to find our headmistress waiting by the entrance for all latecomers. "And what is your excuse today?" she'd ask. Usually it was that there was a delay on the trams, but this excuse wore a bit thin after a time and I was hard put to think up other excuses.

When I was about twelve years of age, it was found that I was shortsighted and needed glasses. On the day I went to pick up my glasses from the optician it was snowing, and as I walked out

of the shop wearing the new glasses, I could see each snowdrop for the very first time, not just a white haze. It was a most incredible experience. In those days, glasses were not the 'in thing', and so they stayed in their case most of the time and were used only in times of desperate need.

There were five Jewish girls, five Protestant girls and fifteen Catholic girls in my class. The state religion in Austria was Catholicism. We all had religious instruction once a week at the same time, in different classrooms for each religion. A young priest just out of seminary taught the Catholic girls, and in the higher forms all of us thought up some embarrassing questions to put to him. They would ask him to explain how Mary gave birth to Jesus, how come she was pregnant. We all listened with great enjoyment to the Catholic girls telling us how the young priest turned bright red, stuttered, didn't know where to look and couldn't give them a satisfactory answer.

I also attended religious instruction after school, somewhat similar to 'Sunday school'. Once I remember our teacher telling us, "Girls, you don't need to come next week, because I'm going to be sick!" Nevertheless we did learn quite a bit, notably the Hebrew alphabet. As soon as I had mastered that, I started writing to my paternal grandfather who lived in Galicia, in German but with Hebrew letters. How odd this must have been for him!

Form Four proved to be a bad school year for me; my marks took a dive, and what a dive! Most likely I didn't concentrate on my studies because I spent too much time on my extracurricular activities, such as *Makkabi*, a Jewish sports association and *Brith Zirenu*, a youth organization with a general Zionist orientation. My report card at the end of that year read nearly all *genuegend*,

or fair. When I handed the report card to my father, he read it through and said absolutely nothing, but just looked at me. For me, this was worse than any reprimand. I pulled up my socks and consequently did well at Matriculation, the final year at school. In 1936, at the age of 18, I obtained my Matriculation Certificate.

A highlight in the winter was our skiing holidays. My parents bought me a complete outfit including skis, stocks, boots, trousers and jacket. I knitted the heavy socks, mittens and headband to protect my ears from the cold.

Our first school ski holiday was spent in Annaberg in the Austrian Alps. By coincidence, a group of soldiers, also on a skiing holiday, were stationed there too. In the early hours of the morning a few of us girls sneaked down to where all the skis were kept. There were two kinds of wax used on skis, one type for climbing, the other for easy gliding. We 'fixed' the soldiers' skis by putting *Gleitwachs*, gliding wax, on one ski and Steigwachs, climbing wax, on the other. We then spent the morning on the ski slopes, watching with great amusement as the soldiers tried to cope with one ski pulling in one direction and the other in the opposite direction!

Skiing was a most enjoyable pastime. After attending the school ski holiday, a group of us, all members of Makkabi, went skiing every Sunday to the *Wienerwald*, the hills surrounding Vienna. Mostly it was cross-country skiing. One could get there by tram. We used to leave fairly early in the morning and spend the day in the hills. The air was exhilarating and the landscape so picturesque, with the snow-covered trees. Even thinking about it now makes me smile with pleasure. In the summertime, these Sunday outings would continue, only we would swim in pools

and in the Danube.

As I mentioned before, getting up in the morning was not one of my strong points in those days. On Sundays, however, I would be up bright and early, much to the annoyance of my father. Sunday was the one day when he could sleep in. I remember how he complained to my mother: "The whole week this girl is unable to get up on time, but come Sunday, she gets up so early she disturbs the household on the one day when I have a chance to rest."

I became very involved with Makkabi in athletics and gymnastics, not that I was particularly good at them, but I nevertheless enjoyed the activity. When I was about sixteen, I was even promoted to being a leader of a group of ten-year-olds. This gave me quite a feeling of achievement and enjoyment. I also went to Brith Zirenu with my friend Gerda Spitzer, who lived in the same building on the next floor. We went to many meetings, outings, all sorts of activities and various camps, all of which I greatly enjoyed.

Quite a few of our friends went on *Aliyah*, emigrated to Israel, around 1935. I never brought this topic up with my parents, as there was no way I would have gone anywhere without them. Incidentally, my friend Gerda Spitzer went to Israel in 1938 and settled in Kfar Hamakkabi with her husband, Gershon Cohn, whom she met and married in Vienna. We visited her there in 1969, when we were in Israel for Evie and Elliott's wedding. Gerda was in charge of the kitchen, all fitted out in gleaming stainless steel. We got there during Pesach and on the day we arrived, she, with some of her helpers, had just made 2000 matza dumplings.

My maternal grandmother, Hedwig Deutsch, was very much

part of our lives. We visited each other very often. She too lived on Mariahilferstrasse, within easy walking distance of our home. She and her son, Onkel Emil, had a retail homeware store on Mariahilferstrasse. I loved going to the shop and always pestered my uncle to be allowed to serve customers. My grandmother had a very small flat with one bedroom, a dining room and a tiny kitchenette. How she managed to cook and prepare her delicious Pesach Seder meals for eleven people in that tiny little area is still not clear to me. The flat had no bathroom and the washbasin and toilet were in the corridor, serving all three tenants on that floor. For us today, these conditions are unimaginable!

How wonderful and unforgettable were the two Seder nights we always spent at my grandmother's house! My two uncles, Onkel Emil, who led the Seder, Onkel Buby, Tante Irene and my mother all had very good voices and there was a lot of singing. As well as our family, Tante Irene was there with her family, Onkel Karl Fuerth, her second husband, who was a general practitioner, and his two children, Gerty and Hans. If any of us children were noisy, my grandmother, who was very religious, would just look at us over her glasses without saying anything, but that was sufficient to shut us up immediately.

During the High Holydays we attended the *Turnergasse Tempel*, an orthodox synagogue not unlike some of Melbourne's orthodox synagogues, the main difference being that in the Turnergasse Tempel it was so quiet that one could hear a pin drop. My grandmother, Tante Irene, my mother and I had four seats upstairs. My father and Kurt had their seats downstairs. The Rabbi had a wonderful voice and the service was very enjoyable. There was such decorum in those days. I guess with advancing age, I would almost like to turn back the clock! Is this what

nostalgia is all about?

My grandmother was very fond of cacti and had whole collections of all kinds of different varieties. She kept these on a small ledge in front of her bedroom window. On special occasions my mother always bought a cactus plant for my brother and me to give to our grandmother. That was all right until we arrived in front of the flat. Both of us wanted to carry the plant and of course we argued about it. So in the end, there was nothing left for my mother to do but go back to the shop and buy another cactus!

During my years at the Realgymnasium, I formed only two friendships at school, probably because I was so involved with Makkabi and Brith Zirenu. One girl was Lizzy Hoffman, whose father was a dermatologist. The other was a non-Jewish girl, Emmy Kropf, whose father was an officer in the Austrian Army. They lived in the *Stiftskaserne* on Mariahilferstrasse, a large block of apartments where only Army officers and their families lived. Emmy was an excellent pianist and as a result she was able to go to orchestra rehearsals. One day she took me to a rehearsal of the 'Messiah' by Handel. The conductor was the world famous Bruno Walter. For me, this is still an unforgettable experience – Bruno Walter, casually dressed, shirt sleeves rolled up, interrupting the musicians, explaining how he wanted a particular part to be played. It was so different from when one hears the actual performance!

Emmy usually spent the school vacations in London, mainly to perfect her English. Through her connections, she managed to get me a permit to go to England in 1938 as a 'lady's maid'. I did a crash course in the correct way of serving and waiting at the table. However, I didn't take advantage of this opportunity, as I

did not want to leave Vienna without my family. On a visit back to Vienna in 1973, I met up with Emmy. She told me that in late 1938 my mother asked her not to visit us again, as she could be in danger if caught visiting a Jewish family. She remarked how thoughtful that was of my mother. It was something I either didn't know, or had forgotten.

THREE

After matriculating I attended a business college, where I learned various subjects including bookkeeping, business correspondence in German and English, stenography and a few other business-related subjects. After this one year course, I started work in my father's business, J. Seiden & Bruder, which dealt in wholesale homewares. I greatly enjoyed my work there. I got on very well with my father and also my Onkel Ignaz, my father's youngest brother, who was a junior partner in the business. As a rule, sons usually followed in their fathers' footsteps, but there didn't seem to be any doubt that my brother was destined for an academic career. Thus, in our case, it was the daughter who joined her father in business.

My father, Jakob Seiden, was born on the August 3rd, 1889, in Makuniow, Galicia, Poland, and arrived in Vienna around 1910. He found employment in a retail homewares store at the Schwendermarkt, a thriving market with many stallholders and shops where my mother did her daily shopping. Incidentally, my father-in-law, Wilhelm Skall, had a liquor store at that market. My parents met about a year after my father came to Vienna and were married in 1912 on the festival of Lag B'omer. When war broke out in 1914 my father was called up. Luckily he was found unfit for active service because of bad varicose veins, so he spent the war years working in a military office.

After the war, around 1920, my father started his own

business in basement premises in *Goldschlagstrasse* in the Fifteenth District. From these very humble beginnings, when he even pulled his own cart delivering goods to customers, he eventually moved to very large premises in the First District. These consisted of a huge ground floor area and a basement area of the same size. To move into the First District, either to live or for business, meant you had 'arrived'. My father's business soon became the second largest wholesale homewares business in Austria. What happened with the business after the Anschluss will be told in another chapter.

Some time in 1936, when I was eighteen, I was on my way home when I met a friend of mine in front of our house. My friend was with a friend of his, to whom I was introduced. That was how I first met my husband-to-be, Ernst Skall. Ernst asked me if I would like to go to the cinema with him and I gladly accepted. He then invited me to a *Fuenfuhr Tee*, an afternoon tea dance, with a group of his friends. From then on I became part of his 'crowd' and we saw each other practically every day. His house was one tram stop away from mine and every morning I would wait at my tram stop to catch the same tram. Needless to say that made me later than ever for school!

Ernst was nine years older than I was and was, at that time, employed by Electrolux as a vacuum cleaner salesman, an occupation that didn't greatly impress my parents. They were also not thrilled by the difference in our ages. However, Ernst and I were not about to stop seeing each other and continued our relationship. Eventually my parents realised that there wasn't much they could do and accepted things the way they were.

My brother had his barmitzvah in February 1937 at the Turnergasse Syngagogue. The reception was held on

Sunday afternoon at *Café Mariahilf*, a well-known café on Mariahilferstrasse, where we often used to go for *Jause*, afternoon tea, with our parents. There was a large crowd of family and friends. I loved children and consequently spent most of my time with the young guests. At one stage my mother called me over and said, "You are a big girl, don't spend so much time with the children and move among our other guests." I did as I was told, but had a lot more fun with the children!

In the summer of 1937 our family decided to take a holiday in Riccione, Italy. Shortly before we were due to leave, my brother fractured his wrist. My mother stayed with him in Vienna, as he required medical attention, and my father and I travelled to Riccione by ourselves. Ernst followed us there and we enjoyed a wonderful holiday. Mussolini had his summer residence in Riccione. One day, while we were sunbathing on the beach, Mussolini arrived in a small boat. This was a very exciting experience for us, to actually see Mussolini wearing just a pair of bathers and mingling with the holidaymakers on the beach. Ernst was one of the people who got to shake *Il Duce's* hand. Ernst swore he was never going to wash his hand again! Strange to say, neither of us felt any antipathy to this Fascist leader at that time. We simply didn't connect him to Nazism.

At the end of 1937 our accountant notified us that we were to have a tax audit. My father was beside himself. He was totally honest and straightforward and could not comprehend how such a thing could have happened. My Onkel Ignaz was in charge of the accounts while my father was in charge of sales. My father became angry with Onkel Ignaz, whom he blamed for submitting figures to the taxation department which must not have been quite right, causing suspicion and thus requiring investigation. I

remember the accountant and myself sitting up until late at night, rewriting some ledgers. All this turned out to be quite unnecessary as in the end, although our tax had been slightly underestimated, there was only a small fine to pay.

Yet I will never forget my father's despair during the weeks from when we were notified of the impending audit to when it actually took place. We feared for his life; we didn't dare leave him on his own; we watched his every move, always thinking he might want to commit suicide in one way or another. Shortly after this episode, on the 13th March, 1938, the Nazis arrived in Vienna. For our family, however, that tax audit marked the real beginning of the very difficult and depressing times that were to come.

In 1932, the then Austrian chancellor, Engelbert Dollfuss, declared the Nazi Party illegal and banned all their activities in Austria. The members went underground and 'surfaced' as soon as Hitler invaded Austria in March 1938. The windows and balcony of our flat faced into Mariahilferstrasse and so we could watch the march, with Hitler standing in a car, his arm raised in the Nazi salute. The people lining the street welcomed him with jubilation, singing and shouting slogans. They seemed to be beside themselves with joy and exhilaration. The next day, signs started to appear on Jewish shops - *Jude, Jew, kauft nicht bei Juden*, don't buy from Jews, and *Magen Davids*, stars of David, were scrawled on the windows of shops owned by Jews. To us young ones, the whole situation had an eerie feeling of total unreality. What had happened all of a sudden to our quiet, comfortable life? How could it be possible that they hated us just because we were Jews? We were born in Vienna and had lived there all our lives - and now they didn't want us here?

One of the first 'activities', if you can call them that, of the

Nazis was to grab any Jews they could find and make them scrub the streets. Ernst became one of those 'scrubbers'. He told us how his colleagues at work looked down from the office windows and had great fun watching this degrading scene and shouting obscenities at him. The driver in my father's business turned out to have been one of the 'illegal' Nazis. After Hitler's invasion he immediately informed my father that the truck belonging to J. Seiden & Bruder, which he was driving to make deliveries, was now his.

A few days after the Anschluss, an Aryan manager sent by the authorities arrived at my father's business and told my father that from now on, he, the manager, would be in total control. My father and Onkel Ignaz were allowed to be there, but were not allowed to sign cheques or have any say in the running of the business. The Aryan manager's name was Ernst Tutsch, and looking back now, I realise he was halfway decent. He was sent to do a job and I'm not sure whether he felt all that comfortable in his role. However, this view might have something to do with my attitude to always look for something positive in any situation. My father and uncle received a small wage. When we finally managed, towards the end of 1938, to obtain passports for our family to leave Austria, Herr Tutsch 'kindly' paid for the four tickets for us and four tickets for Onkel Ignaz and his family to travel on the *S.S. Conte Biancamano* from Genoa to Shanghai. Those tickets were all my father and uncle received for this thriving business they had built up over the years.

The day after the Anschluss, the teachers at my brother's school wore their swastika pins in their lapels. They were obviously members of the underground Nazi party. At the end of March 1938, the headmaster at the school, Hofrat Hubert von

Partisch, called together all the Jewish boys to tell them they were not allowed to attend school any more. According to my brother the headmaster sounded almost apologetic, explaining to the boys it was not what he wanted to do, but he had no choice.

The *Gestapo* set up headquarters in the *Rothschild Palast*, later renamed *Prinz Eugen Palast*, as the building was situated on *Prinz Eugen Strasse* in the Fourth District. The owner of the palace, Baron Louis von Rothschild, was arrested. His brothers, one in Paris and one in London, offered all Rothschild assets in Austria to the then Government in exchange for the release of Baron Louis. In 1939 those terms were accepted. The Baron was free to leave for Switzerland and eventually settled in America. In 1956 the palace was demolished. The precious marble stones from this former Jewish residence were used in the reconstruction of the *Stefanskirche*, St. Stephen's Cathedral, and to repair damage sustained during the Second World War. What a quirk of fate!

Soon after the Anschluss a brother-in-law of Onkel Ignaz was arrested by S.S. officers and taken to Karajangasse Gestapo and there was beaten to death. This sort of thing occurred quite early after the Anschluss. More and more, we realised that we had to escape from Vienna to save our lives, but how and where to? We were told about a cousin of my paternal grandfather who had migrated to the United States after the First World War. I was entrusted with the task of writing to him, seeing that I had some knowledge of English, asking for an affidavit for our family. I still remember the cousin's name: Anschel Seiden, who lived in Philadelphia. Their family was not all that well off. Consequently they could manage an affidavit only for my brother and myself. There was no way either my brother or I were going anywhere without our parents. As mentioned earlier, I also had a permit to

go to England, but again, this escape route was rejected for the same reason.

As the powers that be were ordering Jews to move out of their flats, either into smaller ones or to share with other people, Ernst's parents had to move. They moved into another flat in the same building, which they had to share with their mechutonim, Nathan and Katharina Nussbaum, Alfred's parents. We were lucky enough to be allowed to stay in our flat until our departure for Shanghai.

FOUR

Towards the middle of 1938, more and more Jews were arrested and taken to concentration camps, although at that time it was not known what dreadful fate would befall them. Many people were sent to Buchenwald and Dachau. Quite a number were released from there, provided their family could prove they had the necessary papers and permits to leave Austria immediately. By June 1938 Ernst and some of his friends decided it was too dangerous to remain in Vienna. They hoped to make it across the border into Switzerland. Ernst's parents, my father and I came along to the train station. It was a sad and tearful farewell. Ernst was especially devoted to his mother and it was heartbreaking to watch them say good-bye, not knowing whether they would ever see each other again. The boys' plan was to go to Freiburg on the German-Swiss border and from there, try to cross into Switzerland. It was easier said than done. The Swiss border guards were most unhelpful and sent the boys back across the border into Germany. Finally one night, on another attempt, they managed to cross the border into Switzerland and were able to make their way to a camp in Basel, where they were to remain until they managed to get visas to their various destinations: Ernst to Shanghai, his cousin to the United States, two friends to Bogota, and another friend to Montevideo.

Many people, especially the young ones, attended *Umschulungskurse* courses to learn trades that might come in

handy when migrating to a new country. 'Cosmetician' was my choice. This course was run by a Dr. Rottwin, a dermatologist. His daughter, Kitty, and I became very friendly.

The excuse for vandalism and terror of the 10th November 1938, the infamous *Kristallnacht*, was the action of a young Polish Jew, Herschel Grynszpan, in Paris. When he heard that his family had been deported from Germany to Poland he bought a revolver and went to the German Embassy in Paris, intending to kill the German Ambassador. Instead, he shot and killed the Third Secretary, Ernst von Rath. Following this there was an outbreak of mob violence which, despite its apparent spontaneity, appeared well-planned and executed. The pogrom created fear and hysteria. Now even those Jews who had thought they would be safe from persecution realised they had to leave Austria sooner rather than later. It is painful to think how many Jewish lives could have been saved if the United States, England and other countries had opened their doors. Instead, the Jews who had nowhere to go were taken to the various concentration camps. Six million Jews were brutally killed in the gas chambers.

During the day on the 10th November two S.S. men visited our family. They searched the flat, looking for money. There wasn't any. However, they took my mother's jewellery and my skis, as well as the trousseau my mother had so lovingly prepared for me. All the linen was monogrammed. A few napkins survived this raid and I still have them. As a farewell gesture, the two S.S. men ripped the telephone off the wall. After they left, I raced to my grandmother and Onkel Emil to warn them of a possible 'visit'. Later that day, Onkel Emil was arrested and taken to a local police station. He was, however, in possession of a permit to go to England and so, soon after this arrest, he was released and

made his way to England.

My brother also attended an Umschulungskurs. In his course the students were taught to make leather goods. On 10th November his whole class, including the instructor, were arrested. When he didn't arrive home we were of course greatly concerned. Much later in the evening the boys, including my brother, were sent home to our great relief. Now at last we felt we could go to bed to recover from the ordeal of the day.

However, in the middle of the night, there was loud banging on our door. As Jewish people were no longer allowed to employ a maid, Mitzi wasn't with us any more and I slept in the small room she had occupied. The front door of our flat was half glass and when I looked out of my room I could make out three figures standing there. In order not to be seen, I crept on all fours through the kitchen, hall and dining room into to my parents' bedroom and asked my father if I should open the door. "No!" was the answer. There was more banging on the door, then we heard the caretaker call out "Mr. Seiden, open the door, or they'll break it down." I then went to open the door to be confronted by two S.S. men and the caretaker, who left as soon as the door was opened.

The S.S. men went straight into my parents' bedroom. They were in bed and so was my brother They singled out my brother, yelling at him to tell them where our safe was. As we didn't possess a safe, he could honestly tell them we didn't have one. Next, they wanted my father to get dressed and come with them. At that point I fell to my knees begging them to leave my father alone. I have no idea if that was the reason that they did in fact leave without my father. However, they made me come downstairs with them to a public phone. Seeing that they had

ripped ours off the wall, they wanted me to ring Tante Irene to find out where my grandmother was. They seemed to know all about our family. As it happened, my grandmother was staying with Tante Irene, thinking she would be safer there. I was determined not to let them know this. Somehow we managed to concoct some story and finally the S.S. men let me go.

The next day my mother told me she recognised one of the men as the podiatrist who lived down the road. To this day I cannot forget the degradation and humiliation I felt, kneeling in front of these people. If any further proof was needed that we had to leave at the earliest possible opportunity, this episode was certainly it.

All of a sudden word went round that one could escape to Shanghai without a visa or permit of any sort. I cannot recall when our family made the decision to pursue this opportunity. Somehow it seemed natural that it should be my job to secure the necessary papers and to deal with the authorities. This involved filling in form after form, endless paper work, going from one office to another! I still have a dislike for filling in forms although I am well experienced in this task. Strangely enough, apart from having to fill in all these forms, it wasn't unpleasant going to the various offices to ask for whatever was needed because the bureaucrats were courteous and helpful.

As Ernst and I planned to get married and as I was only twenty at the time, I also had to get certain papers to eventually obtain a wedding certificate. I have still in my possession the certificate *Entlassung aus der Vaeterlichen Gewalt*, releasing me from parental authority. At the time, this sounded really funny to me. It still does even now!

At last we managed to have all the papers ready to apply for

passports. To obtain those, one had to go to the Prinz Eugen Palast, so one morning in November 1938, at 5 a.m. I went to the *Vierten Bezirk*, the Fourth District, by tram to queue up with so many others outside. While we were waiting, a group of S.S. officers came out of the building. They chased us away with their long whips. I was fortunate in being able to run fast, but some of the older people were hit with the whips. After quite a while I and the other people who had been in the queue were allowed to queue up again. At last, when it was my turn, I was allowed into the building and directed to one of the officials to hand him the papers for the passport applications. There is a memory so vivid in my mind. While I was queuing up, my father arrived with a thermos flask of hot chocolate. It was a very cold morning and this was so very welcome. However, I begged him to go straight home as I was worried he might be arrested.

At last we received our passports, the first step to freedom. There was one thing, however, which dimmed our joy and expectation of finally being able to leave Vienna. My beloved grandmother refused to leave while Tante Irene and her family, who were waiting for a visa to the United States, were still in Vienna. Sadly we had to leave my grandmother behind. When Tante Irene and her family finally left for the United States, I was in Shanghai. My then boss, Isaac Hedaya, a Syrian Jew, deposited £400 in a bank as a guarantee for a 'landing permit' for my grandmother, but unfortunately it was too late. War had broken out. We found out much later that she was deported from Vienna to Theresienstadt. In a book containing names of people deported from Vienna to Theresienstadt I found her name and date of birth, 26th October 1865, nothing more. I hope she died a natural death.

We managed to get word to Ernst in Basel to inform him of our decision to go to Shanghai. He immediately applied for the necessary papers, both for marriage and to go to Shanghai. I still have a letter written by the Jewish Committee in Basel to the German Consulate "to urgently attend to Mr. Skall's application, as he wishes to join his family in Genoa, where he intends to get married". The Jewish Committee provided Ernst with a ticket to travel on the S.S. Conte Biancamano from Genoa to Shanghai. In the meantime my parents, brother and I travelled by train from Vienna. Travelling with us were Ernst's parents, his sister and brother-in-law, Herta and Alfred Nussbaum, Alfred's parents, Katharina and Nathan Nussbaum and a young cousin, Trude Kleinman, whose father had left for Shanghai earlier.

FIVE

The feeling of relief as we crossed the border from Austria into Italy was indescribable. Ernst was waiting for us when we arrived in Genoa. We were so lucky to meet there, safe at last! An uncle from Czechoslovakia had sent Ernst some money. We bought two wedding rings and made appointments with the Rabbi, the German Consulate and the Italian Registry Office. With my limited knowledge of Italian, helped by a background of Latin, I managed to buy a small piece of lace which I attached to my navy hat as a veil. Being the hoarder I am, I still have this piece of lace. I had no money with me, but Herta left her onyx ring in the shop as security. We returned the next day to pay for the lace and to retrieve the ring. On the 23rd January 1939 we were married, both in our navy suits. Our wedding was in three stages, first in the synagogue, then at the German Consulate, and then at the Registry Office, where we had to say si in answer to the various questions we were asked.

Three days later, on the 26th January 1939, we boarded the S.S. Conte Biancamano, a luxury liner, to travel to Shanghai to start a new life. Thankfully, Onkel Ignaz and his family arrived just in time to come with us. Their passports had been delayed for some reason. All my family had cabins in First Class, as when we bought tickets, there was nothing else available. Ernst, however, had to settle for steerage, as his ticket had been bought on his behalf by a Jewish community committee in Basel which

helped refugees. This committee, it seemed was only able, or perhaps willing, to buy steerage tickets. So Ernst travelled in steerage while I shared a cabin with my brother in First Class. Somehow we convinced the captain to at least permit Ernst to visit us, but as far as my brother was concerned, there was no way he would let us have some time on our own. He was not going to get out of his cabin. It was a most interesting, unusual and unforgettable honeymoon!

The voyage from Genoa to Naples was very rough. Ninety percent of the passengers were seasick, so the dining room was deserted. Nathan Nussbaum, who had a great sense of humour, suggested that perhaps the stewards should throw the food overboard instead of via the passengers' stomachs, as the food ended up in the sea anyway! I was one of the lucky ten percent who were not affected. Ernst's mother was one of the worse affected. She just lay on her bed, clutching a bottle of brandy. She maintained it helped her get over the seasickness. She was hardly able to move.

During the voyage, Ernst tried to visit me as often as possible. As we left Naples, the sea became calm and we were at last able to enjoy the voyage. The food was tasty and beautifully prepared, the service first class. The fruit was delicious, particularly the large peaches. Even though fruit in Vienna was good and plentiful, we had never seen peaches that size and they had never tasted that good. Apart from the many migrants on the S.S. Conte Biancamano there were many other passengers: a number of clergymen, a count and countess, a viscount, a princess with a Russian sounding name and a lot of people with Italian sounding names. We didn't get to meet any of the elite, but I did keep the passenger list and, many years later, on reading through the

names, I became aware of the illustrious company we had had. The voyage took four weeks. Apart from its rough beginning, it was relatively uneventful and time passed by pleasantly.

On 24th February 1939 we at last arrived at our destination – Shanghai. After all the customs and medical formalities were completed, we were amazed to see the outline of the tall buildings on the Bund, the highway running alongside the harbour. After collecting our luggage, we were put on a cattle truck and driven to the Ward Road Heim in Hongkew. The Heim was a school which had been converted to receive refugees. The area still bore signs of the hostilities of the Sino-Japanese war, mainly bombed-out shells of buildings. The hostilities had ended in November 1937, when the Japanese took control over Shanghai.

Kitty Rottwin, the daughter of the dermatologist who ran the cosmetician course I attended in Vienna, was waiting when we arrived. She promised to help me find a job. Ernst and I thought that now at last we could be together on our own. Alas, this was still not to be! We were assigned bunks in a corridor, next to Herta and Alfred. It was bitterly cold. We slept in our dressing gowns and heavy socks. In the mornings we would go out into the yard to have a quick wash at the well.

As promised, Kitty took me to Nanking Road, a main shopping thoroughfare. We walked from one hairdressing salon to another, offering my services as a cosmetician and manicurist. At last the Russian owner of a salon agreed to give me a go. The salon was situated opposite the racecourse, next to the Park Hotel. After finishing the course in Vienna, I had acquired a small case, fitted out with all the necessary creams, lotions and other paraphernalia necessary for treating clients. This case proved to

be most useful, as it helped me start work immediately. The case was elegantly fitted out with black leather on the outside and orange leather with black spots on the inside. My boss introduced me to prospective clients as "Miss Lily, a beautician just arrived from Vienna".

I still remember some of the clients. One of the first ladies I manicured, Inez, who lived in the Park Hotel, was very fussy about the way she wanted her nail polish applied. After many attempts I finally got it right. She asked what it was like in Vienna. I started to tell her about the events so fresh in my mind, but could immediately see that she didn't believe a word I was saying, or perhaps she just wasn't interested. After that experience, I never talked about what had happened, except the one time much later when I asked my then boss, Isaac Hedaya, to provide the landing money to bring out my grandmother.

People of my generation looked upon our escape from Europe and new way of life almost as if it was an adventure. It was only much later that I realised what it must have meant for my parents and their generation to have to leave everything behind, their homes, their businesses, their families. They had lost almost everything, but at least they were able to save their lives, which was more important than any possessions. My father was depressed and took up smoking again. It didn't take long, however, for him to find a way to earn a living. He bought drums of kerosene which my mother used to fill bottles. My father bought a tricycle and went round to shops to sell the kerosene.

Ernst managed to get a job as a vacuum cleaner salesman with a company called Larsen & Trock. He was well experienced in this field. The company also sold different spare parts and various engines. One day Ernst was serving a Chinese gentleman,

who wanted a particular engine. Here I must mention that many Chinese had studied in Germany or Austria and spoke German. Ernst called out, in German, to Mr. Schwarz, who was in charge of the spare parts department, "Bring out such and such an engine, please. I have a customer waiting." Mr. Schwarz replied, "You want me to show him this piece of old useless rubbish?" The Chinese gentleman then said, in perfect German, "You know what, if that engine is such old useless rubbish, just don't bother!" One can well imagine the red faces amongst the staff. Just as well that their boss, Mr. Trock, was not present!

As soon as we had some money saved up from our wages, we took our parents, mine and Ernst's, to the Wayside Cinema. We felt immensely proud to be able to treat our parents to such an outing, the first time our roles were reversed. It is something that is very vivid in my mind, accompanied by a feeling of satisfaction and achievement.

After some time working as a beautician I thought I would prefer to do office work. I noticed an advertisement in the paper for a "typist, preferably with own typewriter". As I owned one, I thought this job sounded ideal for me. The advertiser was a Mr. Ng and the address given was the Cathay Hotel on the Bund. My father came with me to the hotel and waited in the lobby. Mr. Ng's room was on the first floor. The interview went well. Mr. Ng told me I wouldn't be allowed to talk about whatever I would be typing, to which of course I gladly agreed. "Seeing that you can start tomorrow," he said, "you might as well leave your typewriter here." This sounded sensible to me. When I came downstairs to the lobby, my father immediately noticed the absence of the typewriter. He didn't think it was a good idea at all to leave it with Mr. Ng. I reproached him for his mistrust.

Next morning I arrived at Mr. Ng's room and the other two typists he had hired arrived at the same time. They had also left their typewriters with Mr. Ng the day before. We waited for a while and then started looking for our typewriters. When we opened the cupboards, we found them completely empty. My father's mistrust was totally justified. We notified the hotel manager, who in turn notified the police. It seemed Mr. Ng had absconded, not only with our typewriters, but also without paying his hotel bill. One of the detectives was a Mr. Schrader, an Austrian. On hearing that I had arrived from Vienna not so long ago, he said to me: "You are Viennese and you are so stupid?" Eventually the police found the shop where Mr. Ng had pawned the typewriters. For the princely sum of US$25 I redeemed mine, which my grandchildren in Australia played with many years later. The $25 proved to be money well spent!

Although we were happy to have escaped from Vienna, our Japanese rulers could be repressive and cruel and the environment was harsh. To get to the center of Shanghai from Hongkew, you had to cross Garden Bridge, where a Japanese sentry with a rifle was posted. When you passed the sentry you had to bow and show your valid inoculation certificate. I remember one incident clearly. A Chinese woman passed the sentry and obviously didn't bow low enough to his liking, so he hit her on the head with the rifle butt.

Soon after our arrival we became acquainted with various tropical diseases. Amoebic and bacillary dysentery were the most common, as well as worms, typhus, typhoid fever, to name just a few. Our migrant doctors had no experience treating these diseases but did their best. Water had to be boiled. Fruit and vegetables could not be eaten raw and had to be washed in

Condy's Crystals as raw sewage was used as fertiliser on the fields.

Meanwhile, all our family was able to move out of the Ward Road Heim to premises on Broadway. Our new home consisted of two small houses, restored from shells left by the bombing during the Sino-Japanese war. When we moved in, we installed a shower - what luxury! There was no toilet and no sewage system. The toilet facilities consisted of buckets, which were taken away during the night by a brigade of 'coolies' on a big truck and replaced with empty buckets. Each house had four rooms.

In the first, Ernst and I occupied one room upstairs, his parents another. Downstairs, we had tenants - a couple in one room and a single man in another very small room, called the *Zaehlerzimmer*, so-called because the meter box happened to be in that room. There was a tiny kitchen upstairs, which we shared with Ernst's parents. Actually, Ernst's mother did the cooking while we were at work. The other tenants cooked in their rooms. The house next door was a replica of the house we occupied. My parents and brother lived in one room upstairs, Herta and Alfred in the other and downstairs there was a couple in one room and a single man in the other small room, the Zaehlerzimmer. There, it was my mother who did the cooking. Alfred, who was a qualified shoemaker, had managed to open a small shoeshop.

In the latter half of 1940 I heard through a friend of an Austrian film director, Jakob Fleck, who was looking for a German-speaking secretary. As was the custom I had to pay this friend a commission, or *kumsha*, of one week's wages for the recommendation. Mr. Fleck was going to make a film on the life of Confucius. The script was written in German. I had the job of translating it into English and a Chinese person was to translate

it into Chinese. Whether the end result had any similarity to the original script, I have no idea, but somehow I doubt it! This was a most interesting and exciting time, as the film company entertained many visiting actors, mainly Chinese now living in Hollywood. I was invited to the Chinese dinners to which the company treated their guests. For me, the variety of foods, the many courses, all so different and unusual, were all a completely new experience. Unfortunately, the film was never made and when war broke out the film company had to close down.

My maternal grandparents Bernat and Hedwig Deutsch nee Wamberger, circa 1885.

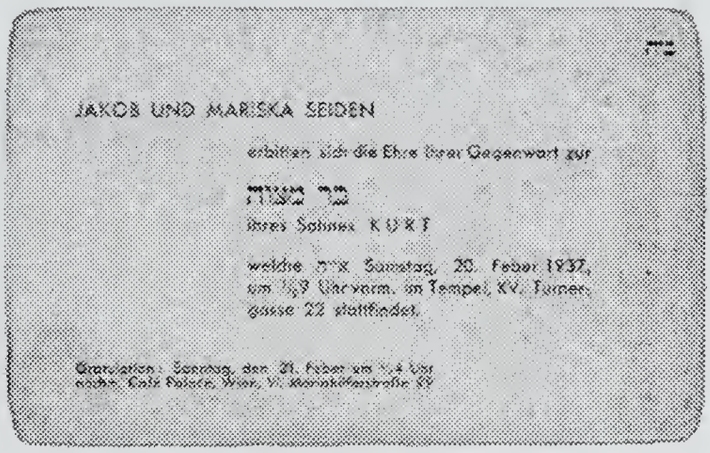
My paternal grandparents, Moshe Nachman and Malka Seiden nee Krieg, and my father Jakob Seiden. Circa 1907.

My parents, Mariska Deutsch and Jakob Seiden, on their engagement, Vienna 1911.

Three brothers Seiden in Kaiser Franz Josef's Service, World War 1: my father Jakob, Abraham and Onkel Ignaz, 1914.

From left to right: Tante Irene, my grandmother Hedwig Deutsch, my mother. Front: myself and Kurt. Circa 1928.

Myself and Kurt, circa 1937.



JAKOB UND MARISKA SEIDEN

erbitten sich die Ehre Ihrer Gegenwart zur

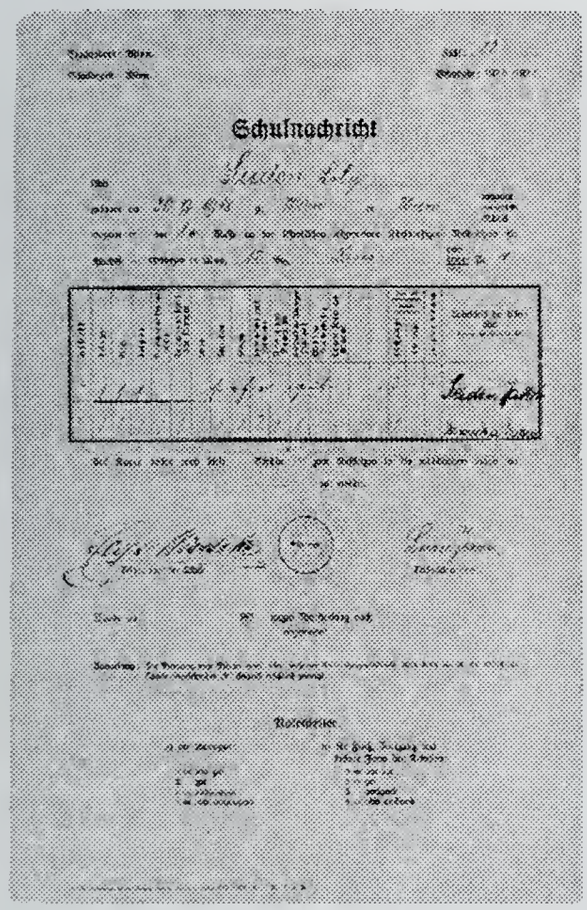
בר מצוה

ihres Sohnes KURT

welche am Samstag, 20. Feber 1937, um ½9 Uhr vorm. im Tempel, XV. Turnergasse 22 stattfindet.

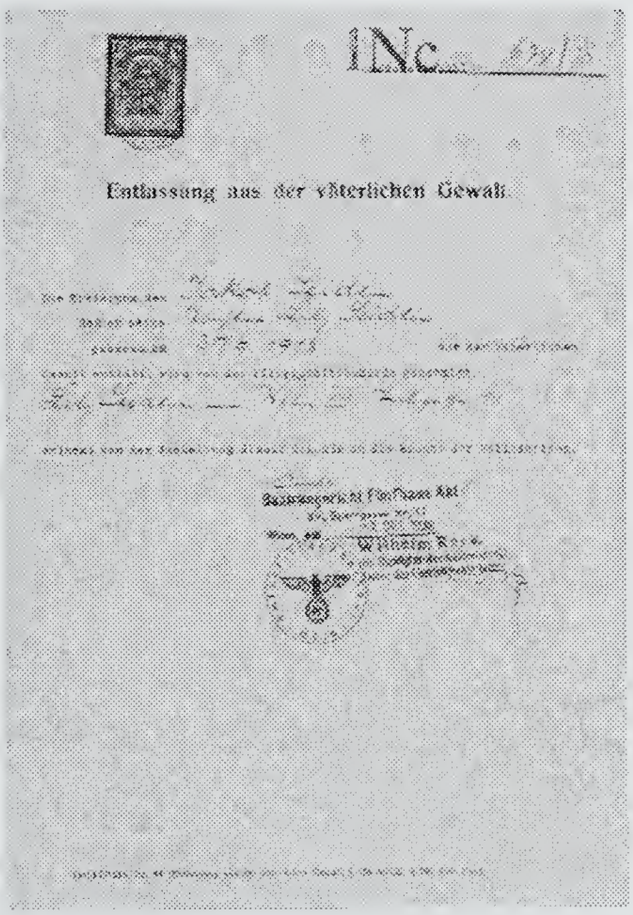
Gratulation: Sonntag, den 21. Feber um ½4 Uhr nachm. Café Palace, Wien, VI. Mariahilferstraße 99

Invitation to Kurt's barmitzvah, 1937.



Schulnachricht

My school report Grade 1, 1924-25.



1Nc

Entlassung aus der väterlichen Gewalt

Release from parental authority certificate, 1938.

Città di Genova

LIBRETTO DI FAMIGLIA

CONIUGI Skall
Seiden

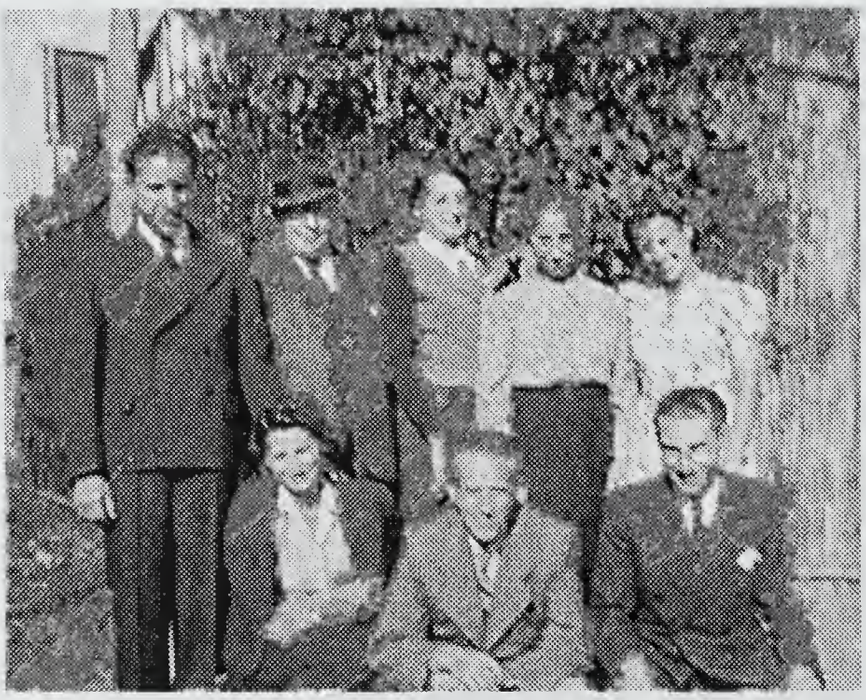
MATRIMONIO CELEBRATO

IL 23 gennaio 1939 Anno XVII

ATTO N. 1

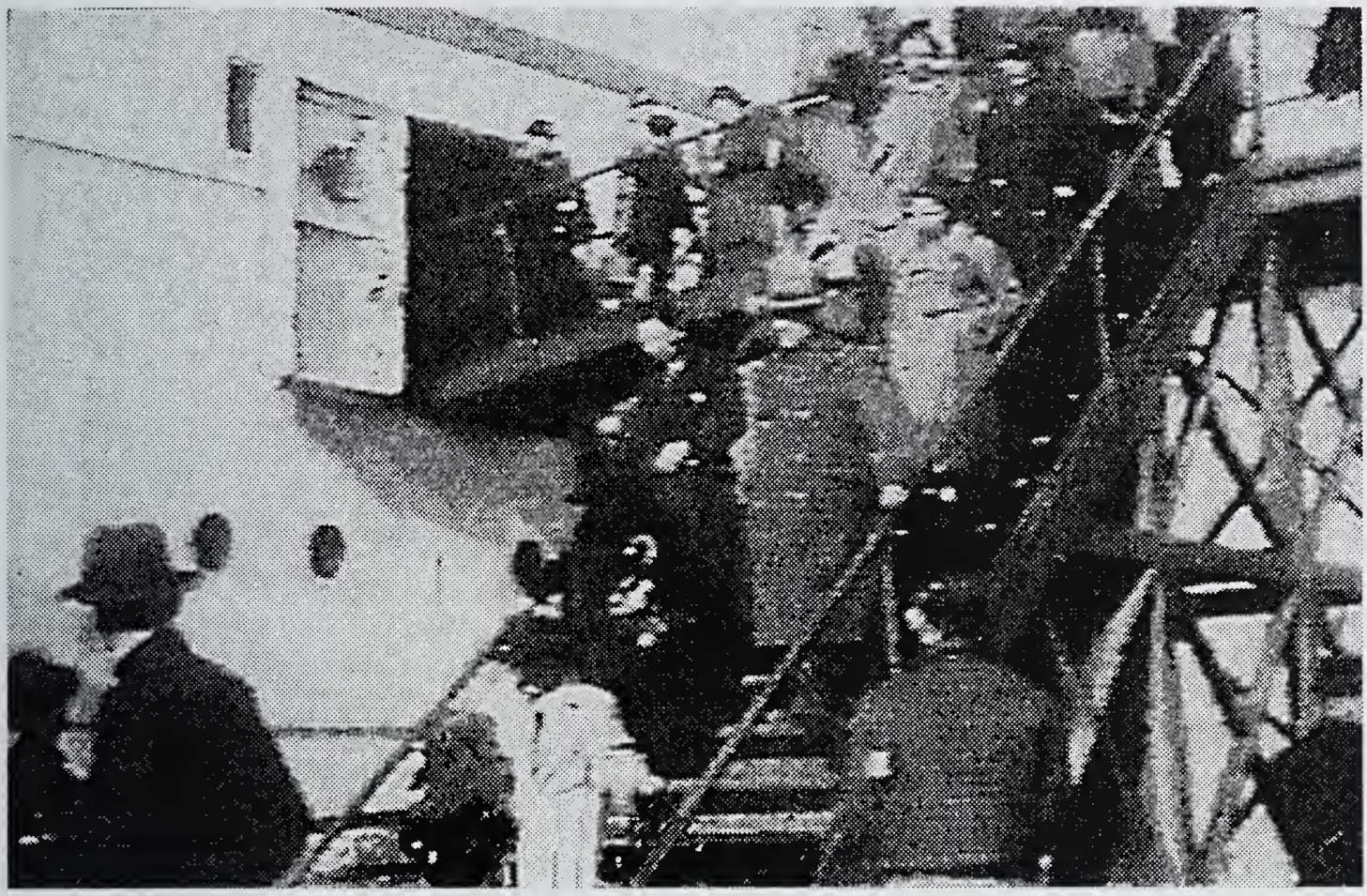
SERIE PARTE 2

Our wedding photo, and first page of Genovese certificate, Genoa, 23 January 1939.

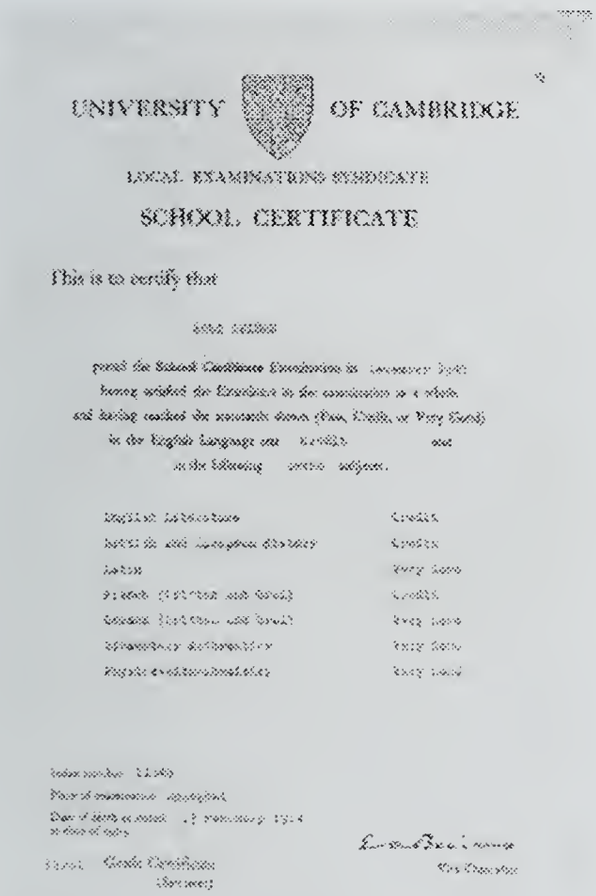


The day after our wedding, Genoa.
Back: Alfred Nussbaum, Opa Skall,
Oma Skall, my mother, me.
Front: Herta, my father, Ernst.

Ernst and me on board
'SS Conte Biancamono'
on the way to Shanghai,
my mother looking on.



Kurt and my father, disembarking on arrival in Shanghai, 1939.



UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

LOCAL EXAMINATIONS SYNDICATE

SCHOOL CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that

Kurt's school certificate, 1940.

GALA KONZERT

zu Gunsten der

FOREIGN PAO CHIA

am 27. November 1943 um 7.30 Uhr abends im

EASTERN THEATRE

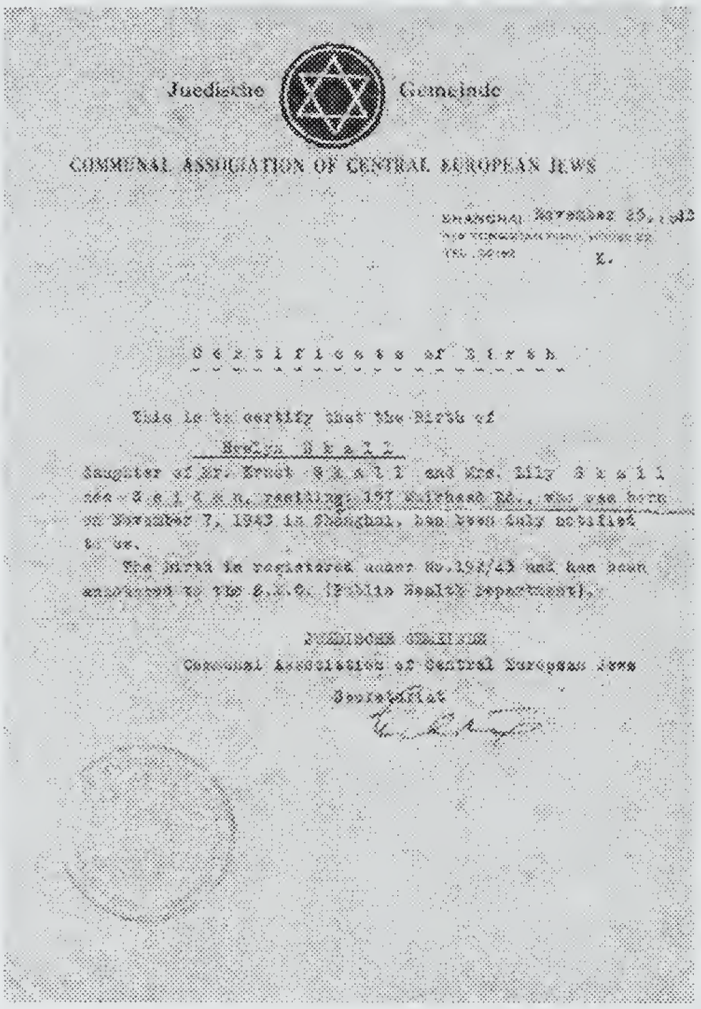
Künstlerische Leitung: Prof. Henry MARGOLINSKI

Mitwirkende: Rud. ALBACHGERSTEL,
Irene MARGOLINSKI,
Ilse MARCUSE,
Prof. Saldin RAPP,
Lea ROSENCHER,
Lucie SOMMER (Tanz),
Prof. Ferdinand ADLER,
Josef FRUCHTER,
Prof. John KRAUS,
Max WARSCHAUER.

Am Flügel: Prof. Henry MARGOLINSKI

Karten bei: Prager, Wayside Bazar,
Compagnie Française de Navigation, 33 Nanking Rd. &
358 Ave. du Roi Albert

Gala concert in aid of Foreign Pao Chia, 1943.



Juedische Gemeinde

COMMUNAL ASSOCIATION OF CENTRAL EUROPEAN JEWS

Shanghai November 25, 1943

No. 5610 K.

Certificate of Birth

This is to certify that the Birth of

Evelyn Skall

daughter of Mr. Ernst Skall and Mrs. Lily Skall nee Spitz, residing 197 Haifong Rd., was born on December 7, 1943 in Shanghai, has been duly notified to us.

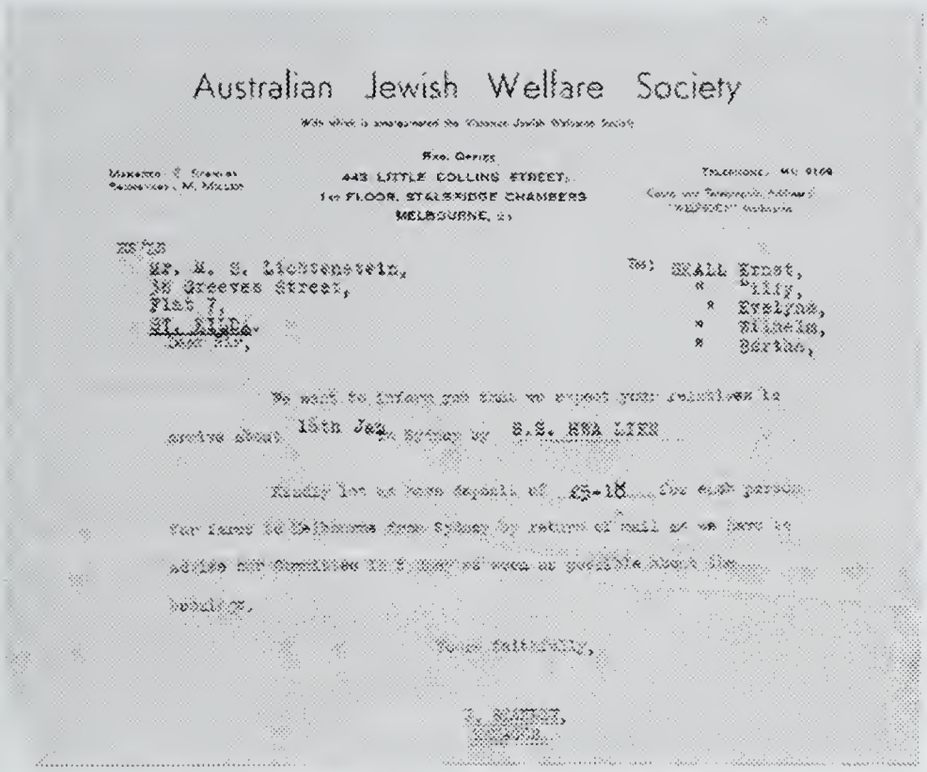
The birth is registered under No.198/43 and has been endorsed to the A.J.D. (Public Health Department).

Shanghai Office
Communal Association of Central European Jews
Secretariat

Evie's birth certificate, 1943.

Evie, age 3, Shanghai, 1946.

Family farewelling us on leaving Shanghai on 'SS Hwa Lien'.
Back: Kurt, Lisl, Onkel Ignaz, Opa Skall, my mother.
Front: Ernst with Evie.



Australian Jewish Welfare Society

443 LITTLE COLLINS STREET,
1st FLOOR, STAWERIDGE CHAMBERS
MELBOURNE, C.1

Mr. M. S. Lichtenstein,
38 Greeves Street,
Flat 7,
St. Kilda.

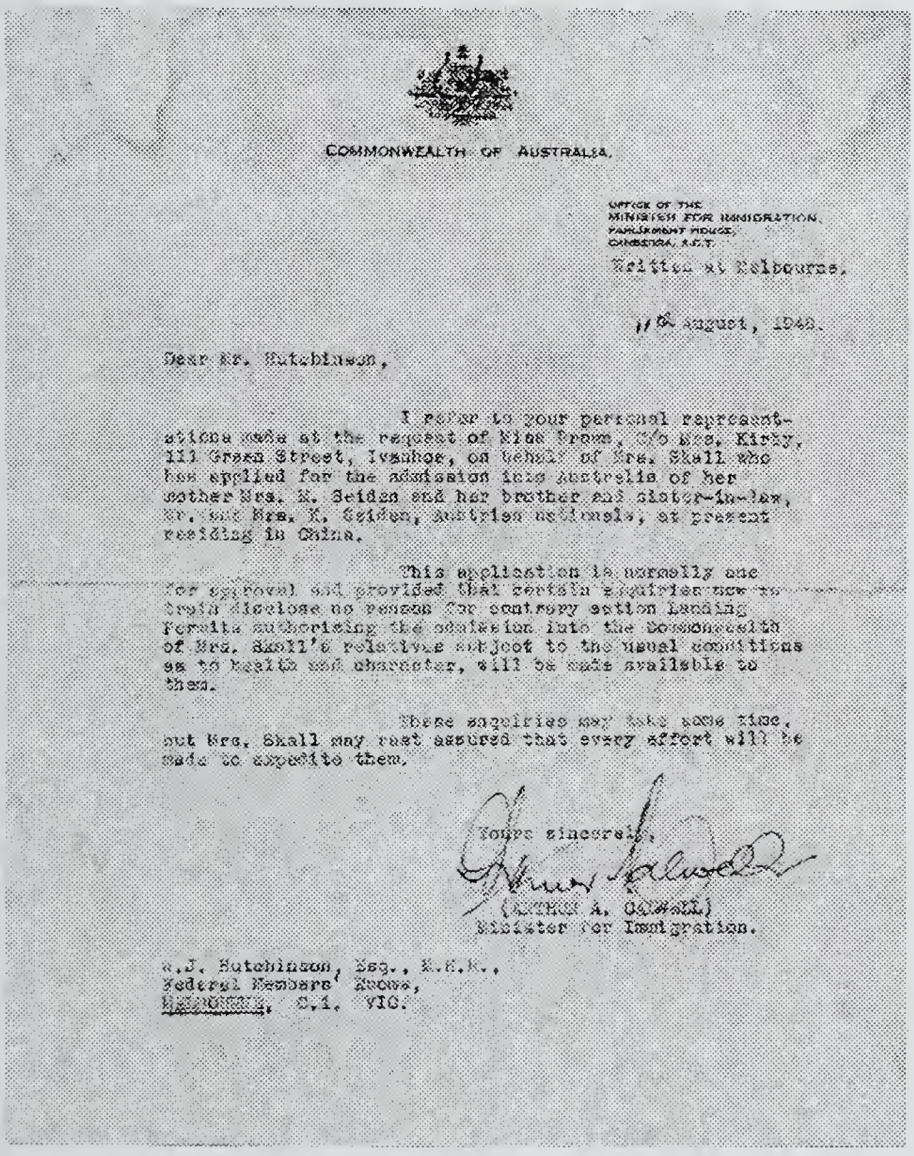
Mrs. Skall Ernst,
" Lily,
" Evelyne,
" Elinela,
" Berlin,

We want to inform you that we expect your relatives to arrive about 15th Jan. by S.S. HSA LIKE

Kindly let us have deposit of £5-10 for each person for issue of Telegrams from Sydney by return of mail or we have to advise the Committee in Sydney not even to provide them with berths.

Yours faithfully,

Letter from Australian Jewish Welfare Society addressed to our sponsor, informing him of our pending arrival, 1947.



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

OFFICE OF THE
MINISTER FOR IMMIGRATION,
PARLIAMENT HOUSE,
CANBERRA, A.C.T.

Written at Melbourne,

11th August, 1948.

Dear Mr. Hutchinson,

I refer to your personal representations made at the request of Miss Brown, C/o Mrs. Kirby, 111 Grace Street, Ivanhoe, on behalf of Mrs. Skall who has applied for the admission into Australia of her mother Mrs. M. Seiden and her brother and sister-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. K. Seiden, Austrian nationals, at present residing in China.

This application is normally one for approval and provided that certain enquiries now in train disclose no reason for contrary action Landing Permits authorising the admission into the Commonwealth of Mrs. Skall's relatives subject to the usual conditions as to health and character, will be made available to them.

These enquiries may take some time, but Mrs. Skall may rest assured that every effort will be made to expedite them.

Yours sincerely,

(ARTHUR A. CALWELL)
Minister for Immigration.

A.J. Hutchinson, Esq., M.H.R.,
Federal Members' Rooms,
Parliament, C.1. VIC.

Letter from Mr. Calwell, Minister for Immigration, in reply to representations made by our Federal MP.

Judy and me in Ivanhoe, 1947.

Judy and Evie in front of our first car, the little green prefect, 1951.

Judy and Evie, circa 1952.

Ernst and Lily with Judy and Evie, circa 1952

Evie and Judy in their Mount Scopus College School Uniforms, circa 1959.

Judy and I enjoying our vacation in Surfers Paradise, 1984.

Judy and Evie, 1985.

Myself and my two sons-in-law, Imi and Elliott, circa 1988.

Celebrating my 70th birthday. Back: Simon, Dana, me, Jonathan. Front: Jezza and Marc, 1988.

Simon and Simona, 2000.

A proud moment: Evie's graduation on obtaining a doctorate in anthropology. With Dana and me, 1997.

My great-grandchildren, left to right:
Davi, Hillel and Timna Weinstein, 2000

SIX

The Japanese attacked Pearl Harbour on 7th December 1941. As a result, the Pacific War broke out and Shanghai ceased to be a free city. We found out only after the war was over that the chief of Gestapo for China, Japan and Manchukuo, Colonel Josel Meisinger, was ordered to go to Shanghai from his headquarters in Tokyo. His job was to help the Japanese solve their 'Jewish Problem'. Col. Meisinger had been labelled the 'Butcher of Warsaw' for the killing of thousands of Polish Jews. When he arrived in Shanghai, he had a proposition for Mr. Kubota, a former naval officer now serving as the Director of the Bureau of Stateless Refugees' Affairs, an office established by the Japanese military authorities. Col. Meisinger proposed that as all the Jews in Shanghai would be in their synagogues for Rosh Hashanah, it would be easy to round them all up, strip them of their clothes and herd them into boats, which would be left to drift helplessly till the Jews died of hunger and thirst. Another of Meisinger's propositions was to build a concentration camp on the island of Tsungming. The Jews would then be used as guinea pigs for medical experiments conducted on their nervous systems – tolerance of pain, for example. Even the Japanese were horrified by these proposals and Kubota and his assistants were not about to carry them out. Instead they created the first Jewish ghetto in Asia. More about that in a later chapter.

In June 1942 there was a severe epidemic of typhoid fever.

Many migrants died, amongst them my father at the age of fifty-two. I was heartbroken. It was the first time in my life that I was confronted with death. For many months I couldn't even bring myself to look at men of a similar age, such was my anger at the loss of my beloved father. I always thought, "How come you are alive and my father had to die." Even now, these thoughts are still very vivid in my mind because that's exactly how I felt at the time. After my father's death, Onkel Ignaz assumed a father's role to my brother and me. We became even closer than we had been before.

Once again, through a friend of mine I was recommended to Hedaya Importing Company, a company with offices in the French Concession. This friend had painted their offices and was told of the vacancy by the boss. Again, I paid the friend kumsha of one week's wages. The company exported exquisite embroidered tablecloths and matching napkins, all handmade in Swatow, China, to their headquarters in New York. There were four Hedaya brothers, Syrian Jews who had established their business in Shanghai. Isaac Hedaya, the youngest brother, was in charge of the Shanghai office, while the other brothers were taking care of the New York office. My job was to work out the quantity of fabric to be given to the outworkers who did the embroidery, answer the phone and do general office work. My boss and I were the only foreigners in the company. All the other employees were Chinese. I greatly enjoyed my work there.

One incident left quite an impression on me. One day I was invited to Mr. Hedaya's house for afternoon tea. A number of his friends, all from the Syrian Jewish community, were there too with their wives. Mr. Hedaya was a cigar smoker. All of a sudden he rang for the 'boy', one of his Chinese servants, asking for the

ashtray, which actually was within easy reach. I couldn't believe that you would call on someone to wait on you when it was so unnecessary. It seemed I must have been the only one astounded and quite frankly, a bit disgusted too.

Isaac Hedaya's wife had left Shanghai for the United States shortly before war broke out to give birth to their third child in New York. When the war was over, Mr. Hedaya managed to board an American troopship bound for New York to rejoin his family. I was left in charge of the office until one of his brothers arrived from New York. Actually I remained with the company until shortly before we left for our next destination – Australia.

On 18th February 1943 the Japanese proclaimed, on the newspaper front pages and by radio, the establishment of a ghetto. The terms 'Jews' or 'ghetto' were not used. Instead, we were referred to as 'stateless refugees', a correct term because at that time we were in fact stateless, without nationality. The ghetto was referred to as 'designated area'. The term 'stateless refugees' applied to those refugees who had arrived in Shanghai since 1937 from Germany, including former Austria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, former Poland, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia. Thus, about half of approximately 16,000 refugees in Shanghai were forced to leave their homes and businesses for a second time. This time they had to relocate to a crowded, squalid area of less than one square mile, with an existing own population of an estimated 100,000 Chinese and 8,000 refugees.

The house we lived in on Broadway was outside the designated area, so we had to look for accommodation inside the ghetto. Fortunately we found a two storey shop and dwelling in Joseph's Court, 157 Muirhead Road. The premises were part of a large block of flats and some shops owned by a Spanish Catholic

Order. Ernst converted the shop into a second-hand goods store. There was a kitchenette and a bathroom with a proper toilet downstairs behind the shop and upstairs there were two rooms, one of a reasonable size with a door that led to a balcony facing out into Muirhead Road. The other one was quite small, containing a sort of built-in couch and, what luxury, a small briquette heater! This was a great help during the rather cold winter months.

Meanwhile, my brother Kurt somehow managed to get himself admitted to the English-speaking Western District Public School. He can't recall today how he achieved this as he had no knowledge of English when he arrived in Shanghai. Perhaps they saw his potential and felt he ought to be given a chance. As it happened, he passed the School Certificate with excellent results: out of seven subjects – three 'credits' and four 'very good'. Not a bad effort for someone who couldn't understand a word of what was going on when he started school! These examinations were set by the University of Cambridge and sent there by mail for marking. However, the results did not get back to Shanghai until after the war.

When the Americans arrived in Shanghai after the war, Kurt trained with them to become an aircraft electrician. He married Lisl Schoeps in April 1948. Soon after, they made their way to Palestine. Studying was of course out of the question, as he had to earn a living. Thus he missed out on a career in academia. I feel, less directly, that he was also one of Hitler's victims, as he was unable to pursue a career which he would otherwise have been able to do.

I digress, but will now continue with the move into the ghetto. My mother and Kurt found a room in a house in

Kungping Road. There were two shops downstairs and three rooms upstairs. One shop was turned into a delicatessen by Ernst's parents, the other into a shoe shop by Alfred and Herta. Another room upstairs was divided in half by a curtain and shared by Ernst's parents and Herta and Alfred. Good friends, Hetty and Hermann Heumann, and Hermann's brother occupied the third room.

Soon after moving into the ghetto, I found out to my great joy and elation that I was pregnant. We had decided to wait for three months before we made the good news public knowledge, although this was hard. For the first four and a half months I had morning sickness and very often 'day sickness' as well. My mother, who did all the cooking, especially prepared all my favourite dishes but alas, more often than not, the food would end up wherever I could get to first! I felt really bad, wasting such good food! Luckily this sickness disappeared at last and I felt very well for the rest of the pregnancy. I continued with my job at Hedaya Importing Co. It was rather quiet, seeing that the war prevented any exporting at that stage. Nevertheless, we continued giving out work to the outworkers, thus accumulating stock to be ready to ship to the United States as soon as the war was over. As the holder of a permanent job, I had a seasonal pass to leave the ghetto to go to work. The exits from the ghetto were guarded either by armed Japanese sentries or Jewish members of the auxiliary police, called the Foreign Pao Chia.

The Pao Chia had been organised in September 1942, as part of the city-wide plan for self-policing and collective responsibility imposed by the Japanese. It was composed of all men aged between twenty and forty-five. They had to serve several hours a week on a rotating basis. The Jewish Pao Chia consisted of about

3,500 men. With the establishment of the ghetto, the Pao Chia took on the task of guarding the exits and making certain that the refugees did not leave the ghetto without a properly stamped pass. The refugees disliked some of the Pao Chia for taking their job too seriously. However, other Pao Chia guards were much more helpful.

The headquarters of the Bureau for Stateless Refugees' Affairs were located at 70 Muirhead Road, just down the road from where we lived. Tsutomu Kubota, its director, didn't have much contact with the refugees and preferred to leave the dirty work to his subordinates, Ghoya and Okura. These two men were to become objects of intense hatred and fear among the refugees who had the misfortune of dealing with them directly. Ghoya was in charge of issuing the passes which allowed the refugees to leave the ghetto. He called himself 'King of the Jews', displaying all the attitudes of a tyrant. Okura was a great deal more sadistic. There were numerous accounts of his frequent beatings of refugees. Ernst and I were fortunate that we were somehow able to avoid dealing with either of these two 'gentlemen'.

When I was seven months pregnant, I had a severe bout of bacillary dysentery. On account of my advanced stage of pregnancy I wasn't given any medication. The illness had to run its course and had to take care of itself. It took quite some time to subside. I had to tolerate the painful cramps without the help of painkillers. To make matters worse, if that was at all possible, Ernst too came down with bacillary dysentery. My brother moved in with us and nursed us through this rather trying time, something I have never forgotten. There was a funny incident while he was staying with us. He was sleeping on a recently acquired couch, second-hand of course. In the middle of the

night he started to feel very itchy. After turning on the light to investigate the possible cause of his itchiness, he found a procession of bed bugs walking up and down the couch. They seemed to be having some sort of a party and couldn't have cared less that there was someone just wanting to get some sleep on this couch, which they obviously considered their territory. Needless to say, there was no more sleeping that night. Instead, we finally won the fight with the bed bugs with a lot of spraying and squashing!

We had no hot water service. Consequently we had to buy hot water from the 'water coolie', a Chinese man who arrived with the two tubs of hot water which he carried on each end of a bamboo pole across his shoulders. I remember one incident well. I had been looking forward to a nice warm bath and when the coolie came, he poured the water into the bathtub. Only then did I realize that I had forgotten to put the plug into the bathtub. What a waste of precious, scarce hot water!

The various Zionist organizations and their members also had to relocate to the ghetto in 1943. There they merged into a single unit under the name of *Zionistische Organisation Shanghai*, or ZOS. There was also the Revisionist Organisation and its youth group *Betar*. A Betar branch opened in Hongkew, which used the Ward Road Synagogue as its headquarters. Ernst was very involved with the Revisionist Organisation, an involvement which continued after our arrival in Melbourne until almost the time of his death in 1996. My brother was also involved with Betar and it was not long after he joined that he became *mefaked*, or leader.

Even during the darkest days of the Shanghai ghetto there was much cultural activity. There were performances of plays, operas and musicals. There were restaurants, open-air cafes, bars

and also night clubs. We used to go to the Roof Garden, a well-known and very popular open-air café with musical and comedy entertainment, as well as dancing.

Between January and March 1943, enemy aliens living in Shanghai were interned. Ernst had befriended a British couple to whom he had sold a vacuum cleaner. They called him to come to their place to say goodbye before they had to leave for the internment camp. I accompanied Ernst to their place. The lady's words of farewell to us still ring in my ears: "Now we understand what it must have been like for you to just walk out of your home and leave everything behind."

SEVEN

On the 6th November 1943, a Saturday night, Ernst went to the Eastern Theatre in Muirhead Road, across the road from us, to see a play *Menschen in Weiss*, Men in White, by Sidney Kingsley. He returned at 1 a.m. By that time, my contractions had started at intervals of fifteen minutes. My friend Hetty Heumann, who had also been to see the play, called in on her way home. When she heard that the contractions had started, she insisted on sleeping at our place. On Sunday morning at 7 a.m. Ernst, Hetty and I walked to the Ward Road Maternity Hospital, a short distance away. I did a lot of walking up and down the corridor on that day to hurry things along. It didn't do much good, however, and Dr. Mueller, the obstetrician, had to give me an injection to get things moving. At last Evie was born at 3.20 p.m. My happiness was hard to describe – it was somewhere between tears and laughter. Ernst arrived soon after, carrying a huge bunch of carnations.

Evie weighed six pounds at birth. We stayed in hospital for ten days and had all the attention imaginable, as Evie was the only baby born at that time in the Ward Road Maternity Hospital. I stayed home for four and a half months while I was feeding her. Actually I was quite lazy during that time, as looking after Evie was my only task. My mother, whose first priority was always assisting her children in every possible way, did the cooking, shopping, and whatever else was required. When I realised that my milk was beginning to dry up, I called in Dr. Koenigstein, a

pediatrician, who also lived at Joseph's Court. He was a well-known pediatrician from Vienna. He confirmed that I didn't have enough milk and gave me instructions for bottle feeding, to be supplemented with semolina and orange juice. My mother insisted I go back to work at Hedaya Importing Co as she would take care of Evie.

Evie was actually named Evelyn, her name on her birth certificate. When we came to Melbourne, a friend remarked that the name didn't really suit this bright, lively, lovely child. She suggested the name Evie instead and Evie it has been ever since.

Time passed. Evie was making progress, although meal times were not particularly pleasant. Evie was a poor eater. When I was feeding her, I very often had my mother, as well as Ernst's mother, sitting next to me. They would urge me to try again and see that 'the child' should eat, not just more, but at all! These meal times proved to be very nerve-racking and both Evie and I usually ended up in tears. It was only many years later, when I observed my children with their children, my grandchildren, that I learned how to handle these situations and how not to over react at meal times. In fact I learned such a lot from my children, I would say much more than they ever learned from me!

My mother, like the majority of the refugees, used a small Japanese charcoal stove for cooking. It looked like a flowerpot with a hole on one side. Fuel consisted of briquettes. I don't know what they contained, but they produced a lot of smoke. Luckily we had a courtyard behind our flat where the stove was being used. There was no way one could use it indoors because of the smoke.

The winter of 1943 was very severe. We were fortunate in having our small briquette heater in the room where Evie slept.

At ten months Evie had a serious bout of gastroenteritis. She lost a lot of weight and it took quite some time for her to recover from this illness. At that time many children came down with gastroenteritis, amongst them my friend Hetty Heumann's little boy, Peter. Unfortunately Peter didn't survive. He was only one and a half years old.

Illness struck again. No sooner had Evie recovered from the gastroenteritis, when I managed to contract typhoid fever, an infectious disease caused by the bacterium *salmonella typhi.* This resulted in very high fever and abdominal pains and produced a rash of rosy pink spots on my chest and abdomen. During my illness my mother and brother took turns looking after Evie. Herta kept away, as by that time she was pregnant. Strangely though, in spite of being really ill, I never lost my appetite! It didn't take too long to recover and get back to my job.

Another addition to the family arrived just over a year after Evie. Harry Nussbaum, Alfred and Herta's son, was born on 26th February 1945 in the same hospital – the Ward Road Hospital. Alfred waited at our place for news of the baby's arrival, a bottle of whisky in front of him to help him steel his nerves. Meanwhile I was running back and forth to the hospital to see what was happening. Just when I got there for the umpteenth time, I heard a baby cry. The nurse came out of the delivery room and told me Mrs. Nussbaum had given birth to a little boy. He was given the Hebrew name Jakob, the first boy to be named after my father. All went well. Herta was soon able to take Harry home. Now the room in Kungping Road had a new resident. Thinking back now, I can't help wondering what it must have been like for Ernst's parents to share the same room with Alfred and Herta, and now the baby. In a room divided only by a curtain, they experienced

the same disturbed nights as the young parents, not being able to get much sleep or rest. They were around 65 then, yet I cannot remember them ever complaining.

At the end of March 1945 we had a terrifying experience. Ernst, my mother and I were walking towards Herta's place to return a doona. Ernst was pushing Evie in the pram. The doona was on top of the pram, half covering Evie. We were in front of Joseph's Court when a Japanese military truck came round the corner, towing a second truck. The second truck swerved suddenly and its back wheel hit the pram dragging it along the road. Although Evie was caught in her harness and protected by the doona, I was terrified that she was seriously injured. People told us later that my screams sounded like a dog had been hit. Thankfully Evie just had a few abrasions. She cried only a little, but was fine otherwise. The Japanese driver got out of the truck and walked up to Ernst, who was carrying Evie, but Ernst pushed him away and shouted at him. To us it was a miracle that nothing serious had happened to Evie. The next day, Ernst went to synagogue to give thanks for this miracle – to *bench gomel*, bless G-d for surviving a life-threatening situation.

There was a severe shortage of food by now. I remember we were able to obtain one ounce of butter and one apple per day. Occasionally I was lucky to buy an orange or two when I went to work in the French Concession. I have no idea how my mother always managed to have a reasonably good meal on the table.

It was now fairly clear that Germany and her Allies were losing the war. In April 1945 Vienna was taken by the Russians. We former Austrians were elated. That was exactly what we would have wished for the Austrians – for the Russians to be their 'conquerors'.

Shanghai had become a target for air raids by the Allies. These were very frightening, as there were no air-raid shelters. Consequently one didn't know where to go when the air-raid sirens sounded and usually, by the time we heard the sirens, the planes were just overhead. There were two occasions I remember really well. Once when the sirens sounded, Ernst and I, holding Evie, hid under the kitchen table – some shelter! Ernst was praying aloud. Thankfully, the all-clear siren sounded not too long after the alarm had been given. Another time when the sirens sounded we grabbed Evie and ran across the road to the Eastern Cinema and just sat down in the seats. There were already a whole lot of people there. Evie was always a good sleeper and didn't once wake during all this commotion.

In July 1945 we experienced a devastating air raid. Many people were killed, both refugees and also Chinese. A friend of ours was killed through a freak accident. He had taken shelter in a doorway and some shrapnel ricocheted from across the road and hit him. The corpses and body parts were thrown on a truck and, as Muirhead Road was a thoroughfare, they were driven right past our house.

Despite heavy losses, the Japanese still didn't surrender. At the beginning of August 1945, however, the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, killing and maiming tens of thousands of people. The next day another atomic bomb was dropped on Nagasaki, again with tremendous loss of life. Now at last the Japanese surrendered to the Allies. On 14th August 1945, a ceasefire was signed and we finally got the news that the war was over. There was jubilation beyond description - singing, dancing in the streets and people hugging each other. The first small group of American soldiers arrived in Shanghai towards the end

of August and also came to Hongkew. Everybody was cheering and clapping. By mid-September thousands of American soldiers had arrived by ship.

After the initial jubilation and happiness about the end of the war, we realized that we wouldn't want to remain in Shanghai on a permanent basis. Thus we had to search again for another refuge. The majority of the refugees wanted to migrate to the United States, where they hoped to have a better future, but just like before the war, there was a quota system. The quota for German-born refugees didn't seem to be too bad, but for people born elsewhere, including Austria, there seemed to be a long waiting period.

Slowly mail began to arrive. I remember one of the first letters to reach Onkel Ignaz was from his brother-in-law. He, with his wife and two year old boy, was sent to Auschwitz. He survived. In the letter he related how his wife and little boy were sent to the gas chambers. I recall the horror we all felt on reading the vivid account of the dreadful fate that befell them. How could this happen? Were the Nazis bereft of any feelings? Even today it is hard to imagine that ordinary people could have been so cruel, so inhumane. And yet, similar things are happening today. It is all so frightening to think that such atrocities are being committed. Will there be no end to it?

Correspondence started again. First we wrote to our relatives to find out what had happened to them. None of my father's siblings in Poland had survived. The fate of my father's two brothers and sister and their respective families is unknown. My mother's siblings all survived, having been able to get to the United States before the war. Almost none of Ernst's uncles and aunts survived, their fate too unknown. Only one uncle, Onkel

Siegfried Jellinek, survived the war in Vienna, hidden by his non-Jewish wife. We are still in touch with his son, Herbert, in Vienna. Another cousin on Ernst's father's side survived the war in Prague. He was interned in a labour camp. In 1973 we travelled to Prague and met with Peppa Skall, Ernst's first cousin and his two sons, Vlada and Jirka, and their families. It was a moving and tearful reunion. Peppa and Vlada took Ernst and me to Ernst's grandparents' house in Wonczichov near Pisek. There again, it was a very emotional 'homecoming' for Ernst, as he had spent some years during the First World War living with his grandparents. In fact, he spoke only Czech on his return to Vienna and had to re-learn to speak German when he went back to school.

For the refugees in Hongkew, life seemed to go on just as before. Hardly anybody knew at this stage what the future would hold for them. No more passes were needed to leave the Hongkew area. We were free to come and go as we pleased. The waiting game was on again – waiting to hear where one could immigrate. Some people considered going back to Europe. For us, this possibility was totally out of the question. To go back to where they had kicked us out? No way! Yet, there were people who did go back to Vienna or Berlin, ostensibly because they hoped to be able to get back what had been taken from them.

Alfred Nussbaum had an uncle and cousin in Melbourne. We wrote to the uncle, Morry Liechtenstein, to ask if he would be able to provide landing permits for us. Innumerable letters went back and forth until we heard at last that he would be able to get the necessary permits for all of us. This included Herta and Alfred, with their one year old son Harry, Ernst's parents and Ernst, Evie and me. Now we had to wait until we were called to

the Australian Consulate for all the necessary formalities, filling in forms again, providing chest x-rays and medical certificates. At last we received the permits to go to Australia. From then on it was a case of waiting for transport. Unfortunately, Alfred's uncle in Melbourne was unable to get permits for my mother and brother. They were still hoping to be able to go to the United States, seeing that my mother's sister and two brothers were there. The problem, however, was the quota. I felt optimistic though that on our arrival in Melbourne I would be able to get the necessary permits. Somehow, somewhere we would meet up again.

Alfred's cousin, a doctor specialising in the treatment of tuberculosis, wrote to us from Melbourne: "The weather is so changeable, you could have four seasons in one day." We thought this must be a gross exaggeration. How could it be possible to have four seasons in one day! However, it later turned out to be very close to the truth!

In October 1946 I found out that I was pregnant again at last, a very much-wanted pregnancy. I was thrilled to bits. Ernst was a bit doubtful at first, seeing that we had to migrate again in the near future, but he too was looking forward to the happy event. I still experienced some morning sickness, but it was nowhere near as bad as with my first pregnancy.

Alfred and Herta were notified around that time that they could leave for Australia with a large group of refugees from Shanghai. As it happened they were stranded in Hongkong for almost four months. By all accounts it was a terrifying experience. They were housed in two unfurnished ballrooms at the Peninsula Hotel. The group consisted mainly of couples with very young children. One friend, Lily Wachtel Cohn, relates how the young mothers took turns staying up all night to make sure the rats

didn't attack the sleeping children. Finally, they were able to continue their travel to Australia by plane.

At last we too were notified that the *Joint Distribution Committee* had managed to charter a coastal steamer, the Hwa Lien, to take us to Australia. Shortly before we were due to leave, our next-door neighbours, the Kollmanns, all contracted cholera and were picked up by an ambulance, one family member after the other. Mr. Kollmann didn't survive, but the rest of the family recovered from this awful illness. This certainly was the last straw to convince us to get out of Shanghai, the sooner the better.

EIGHT

In January 1947 the day of our departure arrived. My mother, Kurt, Onkel Ignaz and Kurt's friend Lisl, were at the pier to farewell us. Lisl had been going out with Kurt for quite a while, but at that time, we didn't know that she would become Kurt's wife the following year. I had become very close to Onkel Ignaz. Since my father died he was like a father to us. It was a sad farewell, none of us knowing whether and when we would see each other again. The time came for boarding. Ernst's parents were travelling with us. The tears flowed freely as the boat started to move away slowly. We went to the railing and kept waving to the small group on the pier, until we could hardly see them anymore.

The Hwa Lien was a dirty forty-year old ferryboat which was really designed for no more than a twelve hour trip. It was very hot. To escape the heat in the cabin some of us slept on deck. The food was terrible. I particularly remember the chocolate we were given for the children. It had the taste and smell of kerosene. One day the ship gave a tremendous lurch just as I was giving Evie a bath. She zoomed down one end of the bathtub to the other, which of course scared her no end. After that, it took a long time before she felt confident enough to get into a bath. The one joy on this 'memorable' trip was Evie in her role as an entertainer. She had many songs in her 'repertoire'. 'My Bonny Lies over the Ocean' and '*Roshinkes mit Mandeln*' are two I can

remember clearly. People crowded round her and greatly enjoyed her performance. She was very bright, a sweet and lovable child. I was sick all through the voyage, either due to the pregnancy or the movement of the rickety, old boat.

Hilda Weiniger was another young mother travelling on the Hwa Lien. Her little boy, Peter, was the same age as Evie and Hilda was pregnant also with her second child. We used to sit together at meal times to feed our children. Peter too was a poor eater. He used to hold his food in his cheeks without swallowing. Hilda would smack his cheeks to make him swallow. This didn't seem to help too much. I too was still having great difficulty in getting Evie to eat.

On our way to Sydney, Walter Brand, representing the Jewish Welfare Society, boarded the ship in Brisbane. He instructed the refugees not to let themselves be photographed, not to stand around in groups, not to speak in their native tongue and especially not to speak German in public. We thought this was a great start having to observe all these restrictive rules in our new country. At that time, Australians were less tolerant of newcomers than they are now and there were strong anti-German feelings. I must admit though that I personally never experienced any of these sentiments.

At last we arrived in Sydney and disembarked, ready to start a new life in Australia. The Jewish Welfare Society in Sydney had arranged accommodation for us for our one night there in private homes. We were made to feel very welcome by our hosts. The following day we continued on to Melbourne by train. The train fares had been paid by our sponsor, Alfred's uncle, in Melbourne. I vividly remember buying plums for our train trip. After all those years of having to be so careful, it was great to be able to eat fruit

without having to wash it in Condy's Crystals!

Herta and Alfred had arrived in Melbourne well before we did. They had found accommodation in a dwelling behind a jewellery shop in High Street, Preston. The dwelling consisted of a kitchen and lounge room downstairs and three bedrooms upstairs. Alfred, Herta and Harry, who was nearly two, slept in one bedroom, Ernst's parents in another and Ernst, Evie and I slept in the third bedroom. It was extremely hot, especially upstairs. From our window you could climb out onto the roof. Evie always loved climbing, so it required a constant watchful eye on our part to prevent her from climbing out of that window onto the roof whenever she felt like it.

Alfred had formed a partnership with Daniel Rubinstein, another refugee from Shanghai. Together they started a shoe manufacturing business in Kerr Street, Fitzroy. Herta, with her mother's help, took in work from frock manufacturers, putting the finishing touches on dresses. Being an outworker was an ideal way for young mothers to earn a living, as they could work from home, take care of their children and look after the household at the same time.

As soon as we had settled in, we started looking for accommodation of our own. Ernst saw an advertisement for a house to rent in Green Street, Ivanhoe. On inspection we were rapt. It was a weatherboard house. There was a huge apricot tree in the garden at the back, laden with fruit, a large lemon tree, all sorts of vegetables, blackberries, strawberries, raspberries and to top it all off, a chicken coop with chickens and a rooster. We thought this must be heaven. Even though the rent was quite high, Ernst signed a lease and we moved into the house six weeks after we arrived in Melbourne.

The neighbours in Green Street welcomed us warmly. They couldn't do enough for us. The Cullen family lived across the road. They were devout Catholics. Molly Cullen, a teacher, sewed curtains for me and helped wherever she could. In turn I asked the neighbours in for coffee and *Guglhupf*, a typical Viennese buttercake, which they relished and which became well known in Green Street. Actually, the coffee in those days, called Bushells Essence, tasted terrible – not like real coffee at all. Gradually, with the influx of migrants, food in general became more varied and cosmopolitan and many more varieties of coffee became available for the connoisseur.

Ernst and Karl Appel, a friend from Shanghai who had also travelled on the Hwa Lien with his family, looked at the possibility of acquiring a men's wear store. Karl had the means for such a venture. Ernst was to be the working partner. After looking around for quite some time, they were unable to find a suitable business and decided against this idea. Karl eventually bought an orchard in Shepparton.

Zsiga Stock, the then president of the United Zionist Revisionist Organisation, suggested to Ernst that he go into partnership with a Mr. Glick, the owner of licensed premises in Spotswood. As Ernst's parents had manufactured liqueurs in Vienna which had sold well there, he thought that Ernst should try his luck manufacturing liqueurs here. Using his parents' recipes, Ernst produced a sample each of the egg liqueur, Advokaat, and Cherry Brandy to be submitted to the licensing Commission. Justice Murphy, the head of the Commision, wrote to Ernst: "The liqueurs submitted compare favourably with any of the imported ones. The licence to manufacture liqueurs is granted, provided they will be manufactured by and under the

supervision of Mr. Skall".

The licence was issued in Mr. Glick's name, as Ernst was not an Australian citizen. Thus, Ernst and Mr. Glick started out on this venture. In those days liqueurs were not all that well known and consequently not in great demand. Whisky was the big seller. In spite of their efforts, they couldn't make a go of the business, mainly because Mr. Glick didn't have the funds to import whisky, even though he had assured Ernst that "money was no object". The partners finally called it quits. Ernst walked out of this partnership with nothing, since he had no contract. That was a lesson to be learned by newcomers like us. Ernst then had an offer from a company called Baitz to work for them making liqueurs, with the proviso that he should hand over all his recipes to them. He rejected this job offer, as he was not prepared to part with his recipes. Later on we made Advokaat and Cherry Brandy at home and Ernst sold them to people to whom he was recommended.

Somebody then suggested that we should have a stall at the Victoria Market and we decided to act on this advice. We had to be at the market between six and seven o'clock in the morning to be in line for a stall. As the number of stalls was limited, initially we had to share a stall with Oskar Eisinger, also a Shanghai friend, who sold dress materials. Ernst purchased underwear, manchester and hosiery to sell at the market. In the early days he had an unpleasant experience with one of the wholesale suppliers. As Ernst had no experience in buying this type of merchandise, he asked the supplier if she would choose items for him which would sell easily. Instead she palmed off stuff to him which turned out to be practically unsaleable. Ernst returned to the wholesaler asking her if she would kindly swap

this merchandise for goods which could be readily sold. After all, he was new at this game and with a little help, could turn into a good customer for her. The lady, however, was adamant. There would be no exchange. What was bought was bought. Luckily this unpleasant episode was the only one of its kind. Other people were very helpful to us, but this experience made us feel foolish and vulnerable and left a nasty taste in our mouths.

NINE

When we first started working at the market, even though we would arrive early, other people came even earlier, so there were some days when we were unable to get a stall and had to go home empty-handed. However, after some months of occupying whatever stalls we were offered, we were at last allocated a stall in a permanent position – the top end of K-shed, facing Queen Street. It was a good position, but there was just one drawback. Being so close to the street, we were not sheltered from wind and weather, as were the stallholders further down inside K-shed. Many times Ernst and I practically lay across the stall with outstretched arms to prevent the merchandise, mainly hosiery and socks, from being blown away! There was a large wardrobe with two doors to put our stock into at the end of the day. We would lock it and wheel it to the area where all the storage containers were kept under lock and key by the market supervisors. People used to advertise their wares by calling out and so we too used to call out "two bob a pair", two shillings for a pair of socks.

In February 1947 Alec Masel travelled from Melbourne to Shanghai. He was the president of the Executive Council of Australian Jewry and its immigration liaison officer in Victoria. When we heard of his proposed trip, we had great hopes for my mother and brother getting on his list of possible migrants. Unfortunately no permits were issued to anybody and nothing

came of this opportunity. So we were disappointed and the nerve-wrecking waiting game continued.

It was now getting close to the time when I was due to give birth. Ernst's mother moved in with us to be on hand to take care of Evie when the time came to go to hospital. I was still at the market with Ernst on 15th June and at night the contractions started. As we had no telephone, Ernst went, or rather ran, to the public phone in the street to call a taxi to take us to Airlie Hospital in Ivanhoe. On arrival at the hospital in the early hours of the morning, the nurse said it might still be a while so she told Ernst to go home. In those days it wasn't customary for the father to be present and the sight of blood upset him anyway! The next day, Monday 16th June, Queen's Birthday, the baby arrived at 10 a.m. weighing seven pounds. When Ernst brought Evie to the hospital, we asked her what she would like her little sister to be called. She immediately replied "Judy" and so Judy it was. All had gone well so we came home after a week in hospital. Ernst's mother was a great help. She stayed with us for another few weeks, before returning home to continue helping Herta with the sewing and household chores.

It was extremely cold during the winter of 1947. We had no heating, except for a fireplace in the lounge room, and no hot water service, just a gas boiler in the bathroom to heat water for a bath. The kettle was boiled to provide hot water for washing the dishes. In the early hours of the morning, when I was breastfeeding Judy, I took her into bed with me and covered us both with the doona, thinking all the time that it would be the height of luxury to be able to turn on a switch to warm the whole house. On the advice of the Health Centre Sister I bought a small hot water bottle to put into the pram where Judy slept for the first

few months. We had a gas copper in the laundry to do the washing. There were no disposable nappies. When I brought the flannel nappies in from the washing line, they were frozen as stiff as a board.

While I was home with Evie and Judy, Ernst would go to the market with his father, who was Opa Skall to his family. When Judy was weaned, after about five months, I helped Ernst in the market again. The Victoria market was open on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays for half a day and on Fridays for the whole day. On those days, Opa Skall looked after Evie and Judy. Usually he brought Harry with him. Eventually we suggested that instead of going back and forth, he might as well stay with us, and stay he did. His wife, Oma Skall, remained at Herta's, helping both to care for Harry and to do Herta's sewing. She died in 1968. Opa Skall lived with us for twenty-six years, very happily. He had a wonderful old age, being so much a respected and a very beloved part of our family. He adored the children, especially Judy, and they adored him. He died shortly after celebrating his 90th birthday in 1971 with all his faculties intact.

On the days we didn't go to the market, Ernst would do the rounds of suppliers. By now he was getting more experienced in choosing what merchandise would sell. We also shared the work of making Advokaat and Cherry Brandy at home, as well as the work of delivering the bottles to Ernst's contacts – friends recommending other friends. After some time we decided not to continue making the liqueurs, mainly because it was very difficult to obtain the pure alcohol necessary for the manufacture. We felt we should rather concentrate on the market.

Apart from the market and attending to the children and household chores, I found I still had time to spare. As he was

living with us, Opa Skall was a big help. Zsiga Stock's company, Hit Parader, manufactured women's garments, mainly skirts. I don't know whether it was hard to obtain zippers, but press-studs were then used to fasten the openings of the skirts. I would pick up the skirts, take them home and sew on the press-studs. As the factory was located in the city and picking up and delivering the finished skirts became too time-consuming, this avenue of additional income didn't last for long.

I remember one incident vividly. Going home by tram from the city, I put the suitcase containing the skirts I had just picked up from Hit Parader down at the front of the tram, opposite the exit close to where I was sitting. All of a sudden I noticed a young man picking up the suitcase and moving towards the exit. I jumped up and grabbed the suitcase out of his hand. He hurriedly got off the tram. How silly of me not to leave the suitcase by my side. After this incident I hung on to it for dear life. It was a good lesson for me. Had the man been able to get away with the case and its contents, I would have had to replace the skirts.

Fred Bishop, a friend from Shanghai, had a factory making coats. These were edged with grosgrain ribbon along the collar, lapels and down the front, stitched on by hand. That was my next part-time activity. Fred would deliver the coats to our house and pick them up when they were finished. Once the coats with the grosgrain ribbon finish went out of fashion, there was no more work for me again!

Meanwhile Alfred Nussbaum and his partner had become quite well established in the shoe trade. Their main line style of shoe was a suede court shoe. Alfred was always helpful. He suggested that I try to machine-stitch the uppers. What me, with

my years of experience in using a sewing machine? "You'll learn to do it, I'll teach you," he assured me. Consequently we bought a commercial, electric Singer sewing machine, fitted with a small wheel instead of a needle. This was used for leatherwork. The many mistakes I made in the beginning when I had to undo the stitching didn't show on the suede. Thus I could practice on the suede uppers; on leather every wrong stitch would have been noticeable as it would leave a small hole. I worked for Alfred for quite some time and became a reasonably proficient machinist.

We were continually exploring every avenue to try to obtain a permit for my mother and brother. In August 1947, Herta Glatz, Onkel Buby's friend the opera singer, arrived in Sydney for a guest appearance at the Opera House. I rang her immediately to see whether she might be able to help us obtain permits through her connections. She approached Immigration Minister Arthur Calwell. She was advised that we should write to Clive Evatt, a Member of Parliament, and explain the situation to him. A polite letter came back: "I sympathise with your situation, but there is nothing I can do."

Miss B. Brown, our next-door neighbour in Green Street, Ivanhoe, made further representations in June of the following year. She wrote to her local Member of Parliament, Mr. W. J. Hutchinson, who in turn wrote to Arthur Calwell in Canberra. I have the reply by Arthur Calwell, dated 11th August 1948, which says: "This application is normally one for approval and provided that certain enquiries now in train disclose no reason for contrary action Landing Permits authorising the admission into the Commonwealth of Mrs. Skall's relatives subject to the usual conditions as to health and character will be made available to them. These enquiries may take some time, but Mrs. Skall may

rest assured that every effort will be made to expedite them." Still no permits came of all these efforts. Meanwhile Kurt and Lisl were married in Shanghai in April 1948 and the waiting game for the Seiden family continued. How to escape from Shanghai and to where?

The house we rented in Green Street, Ivanhoe, for a monthly rent of £10/16/8, was sold to a Mr. and Mrs. Duckett in early 1948. In July 1948 the new owners visited us. They first introduced themselves as the new landlords and then informed us that they required the house for themselves and we would have to look for alternative accommodation. When the Ducketts arrived at the house, the 'welcoming' committee included me sitting on the couch in the lounge feeding Judy, Evie next to me and Harry on, of all places, the potty, also in the lounge! I probably looked suitably harrassed. The Ducketts must have taken pity on this young family because they informed us a few days later that we could stay on in the house. Actually they were under the impression that Harry was our child and we made no attempt to correct this impression.

Towards the end of 1948 my mother, Kurt and Lisl, finally made the decision to join approximately eighteen hundred migrants from Shanghai in their exodus to Israel. There were two ships, the S.S. Castel Bianco and S.S. Wooster Victory, travelling around South Africa to Naples. Onkel Ignaz also decided not to wait any longer for either a visa to the United States or to Australia and to join the transport to Israel as well.

How fortunate that I am such a hoarder! Recently I came across a letter written by my mother and brother, dated 20th December 1948, telling us they were ready to leave Shanghai for Israel, waiting to be notified when the ship was due to take them

to their destination. They sold their furniture and household goods at a ridiculously low price. Seeing that about eighteen hundred refugees were due to leave at the same time, there was an over-supply of all these items. Consequently the Chinese buyers were in a good bargaining position and paid very little.

I also have a letter written by my Onkel Ignaz, dated 30th January 1949, where he describes, in great detail, their journey from Shanghai to Naples via Capetown:

On the whole, the journey can be described as rather pleasant. Our original destination – Genoa – was changed to Naples, which is only of significance because we were supposed to pick up mail in Genoa. Hopefully the mail will be forwarded to Naples. We are crossing the equator for the second time. What an experience! To celebrate this event, a feast was prepared for us - food and more food! Before we reached Capetown, though, the sea was very rough, consequently everybody was seasick including me. It was a lot worse than our voyage from Genoa to Shanghai, or rather Genoa to Naples in 1939, when nearly all the passengers were seasick.

The reception on arrival in Capetown was beyond description. The warmth of this Jewish community, the extraordinary efforts on our behalf were almost unbelievable. There was a huge crowd at the dock at six in the morning when our ship arrived. Many representatives of the various organisations were present. One got the impression that just about all the Jewish population of Capetown were there to greet us. Zionist youth groups sang and danced with such enthusiasm. The amount of food and clothing brought on board was just incredible. 1200 lbs. of butter, 500 lbs. of sugar, 500 lbs. of coffee, 6000 eggs, app. 100,000 cigarettes. For one hundred passengers who kept strictly kosher: 500 lbs. of sausage, 500 lbs. of fresh meat. Fresh fruit, tinned fruit,

chocolates, cakes, lollies, condensed milk, nuts, drinks and so much more; 3000 items of brand new clothing, record players and radios. All day long people arrived carrying parcels. Members of Betar youth movement were very active in helping not only with deliveries but in every other possible way. I had an opportunity to speak to the Rabbi, who told me every Jewish household in Capetown today is busy with cooking, baking, packing for the refugees on board with such love and devotion. We can all be proud of such people, such committed supporters of Israel. There was a reception on board with speeches, again enthusiastic singing and dancing. Leaving Capetown was very emotional. There was hardly a dry eye. This was one event we won't be able to forget for a long time.

At the beginning of 1950 Ernst started complaining about his eyesight. We were referred to Dr. Ringland Anderson, who at that time was one of the top eye surgeons. He diagnosed cataracts in both eyes in Ernst's case, no doubt hereditary. It was quite unusual for someone so young, Ernst being only forty-one years of age at the time, to develop cataracts. Both his mother and sister, as well as some cousins, had developed cataracts in their younger years. These days this kind of operation is relatively easy and straightforward. In many cases the procedure is done in the morning and the patient can go home in the afternoon. In 1950, Ernst had to remain in hospital flat on his back for one week after the operation, which involved the removal of the lens, which was not replaced with an implant as it is now. Small sandbags were placed on each side of the face to prevent any movement during that post-operative week. Ernst was not allowed to feed himself. When the bandages finally were removed at the end of the week, he could just make out colours and shapes. Later on, glasses with

very thick lenses were prescribed.

Before all this happened we had placed an order for a small Ford Prefect. In those days one couldn't just walk into a car dealer and buy a car. One was put on a long waiting list. After waiting for about nine months we were notified the car was on the way and could be picked up in a few weeks. Ernst was of course not allowed to drive due to the lengthy healing process after the cataract operation. In desperation, I rang Alfred's cousin, Martha Renth-Swift, a doctor working at the Queen Victoria Hospital, who specialised in the treatment of tuberculosis. I told her of our situation. The car was soon to be picked up but Ernst couldn't drive. "And what's wrong with you?" was her answer.

That was an option we had not considered! I immediately booked in for driving lessons, had eight lessons and passed my licence test. The problem was solved. While I was learning to drive, we had some funny incidents. Herta came along on one of my lessons, when I was still doing the so-called 'kangaroo-hop', learning to release the clutch slowly and steadily. A little while after this 'hopping' experience, Herta asked to be let out of the car. I remember her words as she alighted: "At least one mother has to stay alive!" A great show of confidence! Things were a lot easier for us after we had the car. It was great to have our own transport. We could go for drives and outings on Sundays and it was especially helpful in taking merchandise to the market and picking up work from Alfred's shoe factory. How we appreciated this first small green car of ours!

TEN

Ernst saw an advertisement for a shop to rent in High Street, Thornbury. We went to have a look, quite liked the position, discussed all the pros and cons and decided to rent the shop. It became known as Skall's Drapery. I worked in the shop while Ernst continued to go to the market, but he no longer opened the stall on Tuesday and Thursday mornings.

About nine months after opening the shop, we got a call from Seppel Westheimer, our next-door neighbour in High Street. He and his wife Trudie had a cake shop adjoining our shop. Seppel did all the baking himself. When he arrived around four o'clock in the morning to start baking, he noticed that someone had broken into our shop. Our stock was gone and naturally we were very upset. All the stock had been new and a lot of it was in short supply and difficult to replace. The insurance company asked for itemised statements of what was taken, when each item was purchased and the necessary invoices to prove purchase. We could provide all that was required and luckily it didn't take too long before they compensated us for the loss. The suppliers were very helpful in replenishing our stock.

I should mention the help we got after Judy was born. Mimi Fischer, whose husband Hans worked for the Jewish Welfare Society for many years, gave me a lot of clothes her little boy Peter had outgrown. I particularly remember a beautiful white shawl she gave me. Mrs. Lew was also a great help by providing us with a

pram she didn't need anymore. Her children were well past the 'pram stage'. The Lews visited us often, as did the Fischers.

Evie started Prep at Ivanhoe State School in July 1947. After half a year, the children had to do written tests, at which Evie must have done well, as she and a few other children were promoted to First Grade. Her teacher was Mrs. White. One Friday, Evie came home from school with a message that Mrs. White wanted to see me on Monday. We questioned Evie about whether she was in any sort of trouble or if she knew the reason for the teacher wanting to see me. Evie couldn't come up with an explanation. That weekend seemed rather long! With great trepidation I went to see Mrs. White. "Evie tells me you are selling hosiery," she said. "I would like to buy some stockings." What a relief! Mrs. White became a good customer. Not only was Evie not in trouble at school, but she had acquired some business for us!

Judy attended a kindergarten close to our shop in High Street. On Sundays Ernst would take the children to Bialik School in Carlton, at that time just a Sunday School. It seemed the ideal place to give the children a Jewish education. Ernst was the driver, not only for our children, but one or two others from the area as well. As it happened, Ernst became very involved with Bialik School, serving on the School council for many years. He also became a member of the State Zionist Council through his association with the United Zionist Revisionist Organisation. My contribution to Bialik School consisted of helping with food preparation for various occasions. In particular, I remember Mrs. Ginsburg, a very dedicated worker and organiser older than us young mothers, well loved and respected. The school celebrated a Third Seder every year and the mothers would prepare the Seder meal. Some of the mothers complained that it was too much work,

whereupon Mrs. Ginsburg said in Yiddish: "My children, nobody has ever died from too much work, only from heartache."

Harry started school at Wales Street State School in Thornbury. Even as a young boy he was not lost for words or excuses. Milk was provided for the children in the morning break. Harry refused to drink it. Herta was asked to see the teacher who asked what was wrong with Harry. "What do you mean, I don't understand," said a puzzled Herta. "Harry tells us he is not allowed to drink milk on doctor's orders," explained the teacher. Needless to say there was no truth in Harry's excuse which was a very smart one for a little Prep boy!

An incident in Judy's class in Ivanhoe State School is worth relating. Judy was rather shy. On a visit to the school, the inspector singled her out. He had noticed that her age was given as six years, which was obviously an error, as she was in Grade Three and should have been eight. He questioned her as to why she was already in Grade Three at so young an age. She became quite flustered and kept repeating "I beg your pardon?" Whereupon the inspector asked her if she was hard of hearing. "Yes" was her answer. "And does your mother know about it?" "Yes," again. "Is your mother doing anything about it?" Again, "Yes, she is taking me to the doctor." Next day the headmaster sent word he wanted to see me. At that time I had no inkling of this incident. The headmaster related Judy's meeting with the inspector. Both of us laughed, as the headmaster was well aware that it was just Judy's shyness that made her panic under those circumstances.

The shop in High Street, Thornbury was doing well and we decided it was time to give up the stall in the Victoria Market. Around this time we saw an advertisement for a shop to lease in

the city, in Federation House in Flinders Street. "Nothing ventured, nothing gained," we thought. This shop became known as Debbies. We engaged a young architect, Ted Berman, to design the fit-out. The shop was very small, but Ted cleverly utilised every inch of space and even managed to incorporate two fitting rooms. Ernst looked after the Thornbury shop and I ran the city shop. The clientele in the city was so different from our Thornbury customers. There we had regulars, who liked to drop in and chat and tell us about their families and personal lives. We got to know them well. On subsequent visits we would inquire about the wellbeing of family members they had talked about on previous visits. In contrast the clientele in the city shop were mainly young girls or women who worked in the surrounding office buildings and had to look presentable. A second shop became available, also in Flinders Street in Federation House, just a few doors from our original shop, so we rented it too. We carried dresses in the new shop, while the other one remained a sportswear shop, selling knitwear, blouses, skirts and other items.

At that time, Norma Tullo, a young dress designer started up in business. The clothes she designed were very smart and unusual, quite different from anything produced by other manufacturers. Consequently the dresses sold extremely well. Two other young designers whose garments sold extremely well were Prue Acton and Kenneth Pirrie, who also started business around the same time. I often think back to those days, when the customers would choose several garments and then ask if they could please be put on lay-by. The emphasis was on the 'please'. They were very polite and concerned that we may not allow them to put away too many garments at one time. Times have certainly changed!

ELEVEN

While we were establishing ourselves in Melbourne, my mother, Kurt and Lisl were making their new home in Israel. When they first arrived in Israel they were housed, like all the other new arrivals, in Beth Olim, a settlement for new immigrants which at that time consisted of tents. Later on, they were moved to barracks in Neve Chayim. Soon after they arrived Kurt got a job with the electricity company Chevrat Chashmal. This was very hard work physically, as it involved erecting poles to carry electricity and installing electricity where there was none, especially for the moshavim. When Kurt heard that El Al Airlines were looking for experienced aircraft electricians, he immediately applied, was interviewed and accepted for the position. This meant that he had to find accommodation in Tel Aviv. He found a room with one bed, which he shared with a friend, Lutz Witkowski, but they slept in this one bed at different times. Luckily both were on shift work and thus could take turns sleeping, one through the day, the other through the night. Kurt would go home only for the weekend.

Lisl found employment in a canning factory. Her job was to close the tins of cucumbers running through the machine. It was hard work; the vinegar spilled over and her hands were constantly bathed in it. By the time she got home from work, vinegar was all she could smell.

Kurt, Lisl and my mother were put on a waiting list for a

shikun, a small unit. At last, after about one year, they were informed there was a shikun available for them in Holon. It consisted of a tiny kitchen, bathroom, a combined living and bedroom and another small room. My mother slept in the small room, while Kurt and Lisl slept in the living room. Again, my mother took care of the household chores. Lisl gave up the job in the canning factory and managed to get a position sewing in a blouse factory, a trade she had learned in Shanghai. Actually she had been making men's shirts, but she easily adapted her skills to blouses.

Lisl's mother and stepfather, Lilli and Ignaz Quasnik, who had arrived in Israel at the same time as Lisl, found they couldn't settle and left Israel after about one year, to go back to Vienna. There they established a haberdashery shop in Schoenbrunner Hauptstrasse in the Twelfth District. They planned eventually to make their way to either Australia or to the United States.

Just when things were looking up for Kurt and Lisl, they had a sad experience. Lisl gave birth to a stillborn baby boy by Caesarean section. It was a very traumatic experience. Life was also becoming more difficult. There was a severe shortage of food. Lisl's cousins, Gerty and Alfred Stuehler, had a farm and when they came visiting over Shabbath, they would bring produce from the farm which was a great help.

Lisl and Kurt finally decided they wanted to come to Australia. Losing the baby was no doubt a contributing factor in their decision and it also increased the likelihood of being reunited with Lisl's mother. As soon as they told us of their decision, we applied for the necessary papers. By then it was not as difficult as it was when we first arrived and it didn't take too long for the permits to be granted.

My mother arrived by plane. Onkel Buby helped to pay for the fare. I hadn't seen her for four years and it seemed to me she had aged a lot in those years. She told me she had met such a nice gentleman in the library in Holon, no more, no less, but I felt a little uncomfortable thinking how her life may have been different had she had the opportunity to get to know this gentleman better. Actually she had adjusted well to the life in Israel even though things were difficult. She felt quite content there apart from the fact that we lived in a different continent.

Kurt and Lisl travelled from Israel to Vienna and then arrived here by boat. I had gone on vacation to Dromana with Evie and Judy and was supposed to get back to Melbourne in time to meet their boat. I had arranged a lift back to Melbourne, but something went wrong and so we were not at the dock to meet them. Ernst, Herta and Alfred met them instead. We arrived back home in the evening. It was great to be reunited at last. Lisl, thoughtful as ever, had brought two tortoise toys for the girls. My mother stayed with us, in the same room as Evie and Judy. We had rented a room for Kurt and Lisl in a house in Thornbury belonging to a family Goldstein.

Things did not run smoothly at our house. My mother, of course, wanted to help, but Opa Skall resented this interference in 'his domain'. After all he had been living with us for the past four years and wanted things to continue the way they were. For me, there were lots of tears. I was the 'meat in the sandwich'. Opa Skall would complain about my mother, ringing me at the shop to tell me that my mother had done the washing or the ironing, chores that I usually did. Meanwhile Kurt got a job in Essendon as an aircraft electrician, first with Ansett Airlines and later on with TAA. After Kurt and Lisl had lived at the Goldsteins

for about a year, they rented a house in Essendon. The situation in our house didn't get any better and in the end we decided it would be best for my mother to move in with Kurt and Lisl. There was no way I could have asked Opa Skall to leave.

It was a very difficult decision for me. Even though I was fortunate enough to be allowed to grow up without guilt feelings, I certainly felt guilty at not being able to have my mother live with us. My mother never complained about anything and so she accepted the situation. After all, she had lived with Kurt and Lisl in Israel, so it was a continuation of their living together. Lisl was a devoted and caring daughter-in-law. My mother only had praise for her and never had anything bad to say about her. On the contrary, once when Lisl and Kurt went on vacation, my mother stayed with us and when I cooked some soup, she said: "Please forgive me, but the soup Lisl makes tastes much better!" I didn't mind at all.

Kurt and Lisl were living in Essendon when Helen, their older daughter, was born. Ten years later, when they had moved to Mt Waverley, their second daughter, Vicky, was born. Throughout the years Helen and I have maintained a close and loving relationship. I greatly appreciate her warmth, caring and compassion. It gladdens my heart that she has at last found happiness.

Back in Ivanhoe, Evie had many attacks of tonsillitis when she was a child. Dr. Ian Galbraith, our general practitioner, suggested she should have her tonsils removed. I wanted to know the risks of such an operation. "A very remote chance of haemorrhage, one in ten thousand," explained Dr. Galbraith. As it happened, Evie was the one in ten thousand. She had a haemorrhage and needed a blood transfusion. Dr. Galbraith

called in Dr. Pyman, an ear, nose and throat specialist to assist. I remember our neighbours in Ivanhoe coming to our place for moral support when Dr. Galbraith informed us about the haemorrhage. I also remember Dr. Simpson, a gynaecologist who delivered Judy, reproaching me for having Dr. Galbraith, a general practitioner, performing the tonsillectomy rather than having it done by a specialist. Thank G-d, Evie got over this episode and recovered well.

Judy too had many episodes of tonsillitis. The sulphur drugs prescribed in those days were quite large tablets, difficult enough for an adult to swallow let alone a young child. I tried crushing them and disguising them with the aid of jelly or jam but to no avail! Judy immediately became suspicious and refused to take this mixture. Eventually she too had to have a tonsillectomy. When she was admitted to hospital, a nurse wanted to take her temperature and told her to put the thermometer in her mouth. She was not going to do that. "Why?" the nurse wanted to know. "Because my mummy puts it under my arm," said Judy. As shy as she was then, she nevertheless stood her ground and the thermometer was put under her arm.

The children, including Harry, spent their first vacation without us at a children's holiday place in Ferny Creek called Happy Hollow. Being without the children was a strange feeling. Initially we quite enjoyed the peace and quiet, but after a few days we really missed them and gladly picked them up after their week away.

The grass in our backyard had grown to almost a metre high. We had the brilliant idea to borrow a pony from a neighbouring family, the Salters. Mr. Salter was a jockey who kept horses and ponies. The pony was duly installed in our backyard with high

hopes of the long grass disappearing quickly. No such luck! It is not clear what the pony ate during its stay in our place. Eventually it was returned to the Salters. Ernst and I borrowed scythes and mowed the long grass the old-fashioned, backbreaking way. There was, however, one contribution by the pony. We had the best fertilised backyard in the neighbourhood!

The Salters had scissors with which they used to trim their horses' manes. One day, Joy Salter, who was Evie's friend and schoolmate, decided she didn't care for Evie's hairstyle and went to work on her hair with these large scissors. It was the day before we were to have professional photos taken of the children and Evie's bald patches were a sight to behold. We were just thankful that neither Evie nor Joy was hurt in this haircutting episode.

We had intended for Evie to start at Mount Scopus College at its inception in St. Kilda Road when Evie was still in primary school. Mr. Feiglin, the principal, advised against it. He felt it would be too strenuous for a young child to travel the distance between Ivanhoe and St. Kilda twice a day. Thus Evie did her primary schooling at Ivanhoe State School and transferred to Mount Scopus College in Year Seven. Judy stayed on at Ivanhoe State School and transferred to Mount Scopus College in Grade Six.

Like their mother when she was young, neither Evie nor Judy were early risers. Mornings became a mad rush for the four of us to leave the house together at the same time. When the children went to Mount Scopus we had to drive them some way to catch the school bus. Invariably they arrived too late at their bus stop and missed the bus. We would drive along the route to finally catch up with the bus several stops later, madly tooting the horn to make the driver aware that some latecomers needed to board the bus. Once we moved to Caulfield, it was much easier to catch

the Mount Scopus bus, as the bus stop was across the road from our house in Glen Eira Road.

There was a large sports oval adjoining Mount Scopus College. Sports Day always took place on Cup Day. It was an event we never missed. We greatly enjoyed watching all the children competing in the various events, screaming our heads off to encourage them and of course barracking for their house to win. Evie, Judy and Harry belonged to Bialik House. Cousins always belonged to the same house to avoid any rivalry within a family. In 1958, when Evie was in Year Ten, she was girl's captain of Bialik House and Geoffrey Edelsten was boy's captain. In that year, Bialik House won the championship, beating the other two houses, Monash and Hillel. Evie won the junior championship. She excelled at running, high jump and long jump.

Evie and Judy joined Betar. Any of the other Youth Movements would have been out of the question as Ernst was so involved with the United Revisionist Organisation. All the social activities took place on the 'other' side of town, around the Caulfield, St. Kilda or Elwood areas. Thus we became chauffeurs for the girls, driving them to their meetings and to friends' places. We realised that we had to move from Ivanhoe for them to be closer to the 'action' and for us to be closer to the Jewish centers of Melbourne. After searching for a house for quite some time, we found an old brick house in Glen Eira Road which seemed adequate. We bought it at auction. I remember the bidding stopped at eight thousand pounds, our bid. However, the auctioneer after consultation with the owners, decided to accept further bids. We urged Ernst to continue bidding and the house was finally knocked down to us at the sum of eight thousand two hundred and fifty pounds. We had enough money saved up to

pay the required deposit and we gradually paid off the mortgage.

Evie and Judy participated in many Betar camps. We always used to drive to their various locations on visitors day with good supplies of food. There was usually a program prepared by the campers under the guidance of their madrichim, which was most enjoyable. It was great for the parents to see their kids perform.

Apart from the children attending camps, we spent many pleasant family holidays at Sorrento. Several times we stayed at Whitehall, one of the guesthouses. Later on we would rent a house, as did Herta with her family as well as Kurt and Lisl and, of course, my mother. The beach on the bay at Sorrento was so pleasant. The trees provided adequate shade and the water was shallow enough for the children to play quite safely in the water. I recall a funny incident while we were staying at Whitehall. One of the guests was surfing at the ocean beach. The surf was particularly strong on that day and the poor man lost his false teeth! The following day they were found on the beach, washed ashore. What a topic of conversation for the guests at Whitehall!

We enjoyed many other holidays. One year we spent two most enjoyable weeks in Bright. The train trip was quite an adventure. There was a creek near the guesthouse where the children could play in the water. Even though it was the middle of winter, it was quite warm. The snow-covered mountains around Bright were a sight to behold.

Another time we stayed at The Chalet at Mount Buffalo. We hired skis and boots. Evie, Judy and Harry tried skiing. I too tried my luck to see whether I could still balance on skis after all these years. I was amazed to find I had not forgotten. The air was exhilarating and we had a lot of fun.

We spent one school holiday at Marysville. I bought a special

present for Harry – a pocketknife. He used it to make a bow and arrow from some branches and I must say he was quite good at it. We always took Harry along on these school vacations, as Herta and Alfred didn't particularly like going away. Thus they had a good holiday as well.

With the arrival of my mother, Kurt and Lisl, we were now in terms of immediate family all alive and together again. Thinking back, was it fate or good management or a bit of both that allowed us to survive and build a new life? Whatever the reason, I am grateful that things turned out the way they did. Life had its struggles with its ups and downs but somehow we managed to overcome the difficulties along our paths.

My mother adjusted to life, adaptable as she always was. She busied herself with domestic chores in the Seiden household. There was an amateur theatre in Middle Park where plays were performed in German. I would take my mother and my parents-in-law to see these plays whenever possible. They enjoyed these outings tremendously. My mother's health was quite good over the years. She fractured her hip later in life and had to walk with the aid of a cane. Her eyesight diminished when she developed bilateral macular deficiency. She passed away in January 1973, shortly before her eighty-fifth birthday. My feelings at her passing were quite different to the ones I had when my father died. While it is always difficult to lose a parent I did not experience the anger I felt on the loss of my father. My mother had lived a full life, had nachas from her four grand-daughters and even enjoyed the arrival of three great-grandsons, Simon, Jonathan and Jeremy.

TWELVE

In February 1973 Ernst and I sold the shops in Flinders Street, just one week after Dana, our fourth grandchild and only granddaughter, was born. I remember the feeling of joy at being able to spend limitless times with our grandchildren. Seeing that we now had no obligations we decided to go on a long vacation, our 'long service leave' as we called it then. We had relatives and friends overseas we had not seen since before the war.

We left for our holiday in May 1973, starting out from Tahiti right around the world returning to Melbourne in November 1973. We also went to Vienna, wondering how we would react going there for the first time since we were so appallingly treated. Returning after an absence of twenty-five years, we were surprised at the way we felt, just like tourists, sightseeing, going to places we hadn't ever visited or even knew existed while we were living there, enjoying the opera and theatre. Walking along Mariahilferstrasse we couldn't recognise any of the sights that used to be so familiar to us. Everything had changed. As we got closer to where we used to live, however, the emotions surfaced along with the memories of times long ago. We turned around and couldn't get away from the area fast enough back to our hotel. It was painful to realise how many of our dear ones were no longer with us.

We returned to Vienna in 1978 to visit Ernst's cousin and to have a reunion with his other cousins from America, whom we

met in Lido di Jesolo, near Venice. On this trip we also met Onkel Buby, or Onkel Peter as he preferred to be called, and spent time with him in Venice and Verona. Onkel's wife, Adelheid, whom he married in New Jersey, cannot forget our meeting in Venice. They arrived there by train and I ran to greet him. For me too, this was an unforgettable and very emotional reunion after forty years. Together we saw a performance of 'La Traviata' at the Arena di Verona, a most wonderful experience. At this reunion Onkel Peter told us a story which I must relate. He was friendly with the well-known tenor, Leo Slezak. They met once after Leo Slezak had sung in La Traviata and Leo Slezak said to Onkel Peter: "I have sung the role of Alfredo so many times, but I have no idea what's going on!"

I saw Onkel Peter and Adelheid again in 1997 when Evie and I visited them in La Jolla, California. They had moved there from Englewood, New Jersey, and lived in a lovely apartment in a retirement village called Casa de Manyana, right on the beach. We had a wonderful time with them, reminiscing and enjoying Onkel's dry wit and great sense of humour. I was so glad Evie came with me on this trip. I don't think I would have gone by myself. As it happened, we timed it just right. Onkel Peter died two years after our visit. I kept in regular contact by phone with Adelheid until her death in February 2000.

Ernst and I visited Vienna again in 1991. We were invited by the 'Jewish Welcome Service', which was originally created by Hofrat Pick, the then president of the Kultusgemeinde, the Jewish Community Council, to invite former Viennese Jews back to Vienna. We spent two weeks in Vienna. Judy joined Ernst and me on that visit. I had a picture in my mind of how I would show Judy the flat where I lived with my parents and brother.

When we arrived there, the tenant was not at home. The neighbour gave me the tenant's name, Frau Parisek, and her phone number. I called her to ask if we could visit. She said it would be all right with her but she had to ask her husband. The next day she rang to say her husband did not want us to come. I can still recall the feeling of disappointment at not being able to show Judy the place where I had grown up.

Last year, in June 1999, I visited Vienna again with my brother. We travelled with Gerda Herz and Rafael Kafka, our wonderful friends who we stayed with in Unteraegeri, Switzerland. It was Kurt's first trip overseas since arriving in Melbourne. Before we left I wrote to Frau Parisek on the off chance that we could visit her, particularly in view of the fact that Kurt had been born in this flat. Kurt thought it was a complete waste of effort to write to her because he was sure she wouldn't reply. To our astonishment, she not only replied, but invited us for afternoon tea. We found out later that she had divorced her husband and now could make her own decisions. Remembering his refusal to let us visit, we felt he might have thought we were coming back with some demands.

My brother's feelings about Vienna were quite different to mine. Whereas I had spent a happy childhood and young adulthood in Vienna, my brother didn't have happy memories at all. He was teased at school and was taunted with the words "Jewboy, you killed Jesus Christ". He was spat on and his life made miserable by his schoolmates.

Back to the visit to the flat. Before we got there, we walked along Mariahilferstrasse. We looked for our grandmother's shop, but the whole area looked quite different. At last we arrived at Talgasse 11, third floor, flat no. 16. Frau Parisek and her sister

welcomed us warmly, I must say. The hall still looked the same, but that's where the likeness to what we remembered about the flat ended. There was wallpaper, built-in furniture, all very tasteful, the balcony covered in greenery, and the maid's room converted to an elegant bathroom. In my mind's eye I could see it all nevertheless - my brother's bed, my parents' beds and me, kneeling in front of the two S.S. men, my hands clasped together above my head, begging them not to take my father away. We walked out of the bedroom into the dining room, where Frau Parisek and her sister served coffee and cake. We made polite conversation and then went on our way. For me that chapter was closed. There is only one incident which will never leave me. Like a scene in a play, it is etched indelibly in my mind: the degradation I felt when kneeling in front of the two S.S. men in their uniform, the memory of which makes me cringe to this day.

EPILOGUE

After these last few very difficult years of first losing Ernst at age eighty-seven, after fifty-seven years of marriage, then the following year losing my dear daughter Judy, writing this story has been like therapy for me, although the pain is always there. Having reached a good age, I'm writing whatever I can remember from my earliest age through the journey of my years, for the benefit of my grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

As I write this, my heart is heavy remembering my Judy who lost her courageous battle with ovarian cancer in the prime of life, at the age of fifty. A warm, caring, loving and devoted daughter, so sadly missed. In a letter written three months before she died, she tells me to think of the legacy she left behind, to derive the nachas that is there for me, to become the best actress, put on lipstick and a smile. I am trying my best to do what she asked me to do. How she found the courage to write this letter is still beyond my comprehension.

Nevertheless I must count my blessings. My Evie is a tower of strength and support. She lifts my spirits, is naturally kind and considerate. I am lacking words to describe what she means to me. I am blessed with my two sons-in-law, Evie's husband Elliott and Judy's husband Imi. I have always felt as if they were my sons, not in-laws.

Amongst the happiest events of my life have been the arrival of my grandchildren and they are my most cherished memories.

Simon, the first, born in October 1970 on *Simchat Torah*, followed five months later by Jonathan, born in April 1971. Both boys were given the name Jakob after my late father. Soon after, in December 1972 came Jeremy, or Jezza as he is known, and two months later, in February 1973, my granddaughter Dana. What treasures they all are! They spent a lot of time at our house. We had all the necessary equipment, cot, high chair, an excellent, large, roomy pram, courtesy of Lisl, into which all four children fitted at once! After an eight-year gap, to our great joy, Marc came along in December 1980. He spent more time with us than the other grandchildren. We were retired by then and Judy was working. They have given and still continue to give me hours of pleasure and enjoyment.

Another wonderful addition to our family is Simona. In July 1994, Simon married Simona Elkus. The *chupa* was at Kimberley Gardens and the reception took place at the Hilton Hotel. What an unforgettable *simcha*, and following on, a further legacy - three gorgeous great-grandchildren, Timna, Davi and Hillel. Davi was given Ernst's Hebrew name, David. They are such a joy and provide me with many happy hours of entertainment.

The joy I derive from my family helps to overcome the loss of loved ones. This story is for my children, grandchildren and great grandchildren. I hope it gives them some background about the generations before them and helps them to understand where they come from.

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GLOSSARY

Betar	The Revisionist organization for Jewish youth, Brith Trumpeldor
Chupa	Wedding canopy, wedding ceremony
Gestapo	Geheime Staatspolizei, German Secret Police
Joint Distribution Committee	Joint Distribution Committee of American Funds for the Relief of Jewish War Sufferers
Kristallnacht	Night of the Broken Glass
Madrichim	Jewish youth group leaders
Magen David	Star of David
Mechutonim	Relationship between parents of a married couple
Moshavim	Community settlements in Israel
Naches	Pride and joy in family and personal achievements
'*Roshinkes mit Mandeln*'	The well-known Yiddish song, 'Raisins and Almonds'
Simcha	Celebration
Simchat Torah	Rejoicing of the Torah, marking the completion of the reading of the Torah followed immediately by a new beginning of the reading
Umschulungskurse	Short courses for vocational training

My Story is the first person account of a young woman's journey from Vienna to Shanghai to Melbourne. The daughter of middle class Viennese Jews, Lily Skall's story is an engaging narrative, told directly and with humour: a happy Viennese childhood and adolescence, a narrow escape from the Nazi occupation, marriage in Genoa, the war years in Shanghai and starting a new life in suburban Melbourne.

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